

THE EFFECTS OF YOGA ON CHRONIC LOWER BACK PAIN

Introduction

In New Zealand chronic lower back pain (CLBP) is the second highest reason for a person to seek medical assistance, and as a result has a significant impact on the public health system. To date there has been no single therapy that is considered to be most effective in treating CLBP. Therefore, my research question was 'In adults experiencing CLBP for greater than twelve weeks, does a course of Yoga have a significant outcome in reducing the severity of pain and increasing overall health related quality of life (HRQOL)'.

Yoga Intervention

Yoga is an ancient Indian discipline based on creating harmony between the mind and the body. It is a holistic approach with the majority of practices focusing on breathing techniques, physical postures and meditation. It not only focuses on muscle strength and joint flexibility but can help to divert the person's attention away from the pain. It appears to be a multifunctional contemporary alternative which could have a significant impact on improving pain levels and overall HRQOL.

Reduction in Pain

A number of studies provide strong evidence indicating the effectiveness of yoga in reducing CLBP. Both Williams et al. (2005) and Sherman et al. (2005) found yoga to have consistently greater outcomes than control groups in reducing pain. The majority (75%) of those who participated in William's study believed that yoga was of great importance in managing their CLBP, while participants in Sherman's study not only reported positive results during the program but also reported an ongoing decrease in pain for several months following yoga intervention. Yoga can therefore be considered as a viable option when discussing CLBP treatments.



Health Related Quality of Life

Yoga can increase an individual's everyday functioning ability, including daily activities such as family and home responsibilities, occupation, recreation, self-care and sexual behaviour as evidenced by William's study. Assisting individuals towards being able to resume a normal daily regime is highly important within nursing practice. Regaining better back mobility is essential and an additional study by Tilbrook et al. (2011) has shown that yoga intervention is a highly effective method in achieving this. Decreased medication usage is also considered to be useful in improving an individual's HRQOL. William's study found that yoga helped to yield a significant decrease in need for medication and allowed the complete cessation of opiate usage. Yoga is an effective alternative treatment for CLBP and regaining better HRQOL.

Benefits of Integration into Practice

Yoga is well received within society and many already perceive it as being beneficial. This may therefore be a successful new treatment option in New Zealand, as there is a need for more appropriate and cost-effective options to be integrated into practice. Yoga not only provides treatment for CLBP but is also an effective prevention option which would bring about a decrease in the amount of long-term medical attention required. Many primary health care practices and practice nurses would benefit from being able to recommend and refer patients to a yoga program as part of CLBP management and healing. This would assist in reducing the financial burden and workload that CLBP places on our health system in New Zealand. Introducing a yoga treatment program into health practices should yield substantial benefits for the medical community.

References

- Farrell, M., & Dempsey, J. (2011). *Smeltzer & Bare's textbook of medical-surgical nursing* (2nd ed.). Broadway, NSW, Australia: Mosby Elsevier
- Sherman, K., Cherkin, D., Erro, J., Miglioretti, D., & Deyo, R. (2005). Comparing yoga, exercise, and a self-care book for chronic low back pain: A randomized controlled trial. *Annals of Internal Medicine*, 143(12), 849-856. Retrieved from <http://annals.org/article.aspx?articleid=718899>
- Tilbrook, H., Cox, H., Hewitt, C., Kang'ombe, A., Chuang, L., Jayakody, S.,...Togerson, D. (2011). Yoga for chronic low back pain: A randomized trial. *Annals of Internal Medicine*, 155(9), 569-578. Retrieved from <http://annals.org/article.aspx?articleid=1033130>
- Williams, K., Petronis, J., Smith, D., Goodrich, D., Wu, J., Ravi, N.,...Steinberg, L. (2005). Effect of iyengar yoga therapy for chronic low back pain. *International Association for the Study of Pain*, 155 (1-2), 107-117. Retrieved from file:///C:/Users/user/Downloads/369_R2010060904%20(1).pdf

PECOT category	Information relating to question	Explanation
Population	People aged between 18 – 65 who have experienced persistent Lower back pain for at least 12 weeks	Middle aged population and both sexes. After having 12 weeks/ 3 months of back pain I would consider this to be long-term.
Exposure/Intervention	Yoga.	I will be looking for articles that look at Yoga as a treatment option for back pain
Comparison	N/A	N/A
Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decreased back pain • Reduced Medication use • Improved Health related quality of life (HRQOL) 	I would consider Yoga to be an effective treatment if it decreases the client's pain and also overall increases their quality of life.
Timeframe	12-16 weeks of classes	After glancing over research time frames 12-16 weeks appears to be a good timeframe to tell if there have been any significant changes.

Research Question: In adults experiencing chronic lower back pain for greater than twelve weeks, does a course of Yoga have a significant outcome in reducing the severity of pain and increasing overall health related quality of life.

Reasoning: I believed that the findings of my literature review were more suited to be presented as a visual poster presentation than as a written submission. I also felt that presenting the information in this format would be more appealing and provide a better snapshot of my research findings. Research has found that posters are a good medium for transferring academic knowledge and are considered to be a valid form of academic publication. One particular study found that the visual aspect was more appealing to viewers than the text or content (Rowe & Ilic, 2009). Therefore, this meant the colour choices and visual aspect of my poster were considered to be as important as the written content. Posters are also considered to be an efficient way of transferring information to the viewers and develop discussions around the research, while networking with healthcare professionals. Research also found that it is important for the researcher to be available to discuss with the viewer their findings in order to effectively communicate the academic content (Rowe & Ilic, 2009). For this reason I will be present at the presentation forum to further the academic understanding of my poster.

Reference

Rowe, N., & Ilic, D. (2009, Dec 8). What impact do posters have on academic knowledge transfer?: A pilot survey on author attitudes and experiences. *BMC Medical Education*, 9(71).