

Yoga as an Adjunct to Conventional Cancer Treatment in Breast Cancer

By

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Abstract

Background-Breast cancer is a profoundly stressful disease posing both physical and psychological threats to the patient. Patients have to endure distressing side effects of multimodal treatments over a long period of time leading to anxiety, depression and other psychological reactions that can affect treatment compliance. These stress perceptions coupled with cancer-related intrusive thoughts, age, sociodemographic characteristics and financial concerns along with a tendency towards negativity (neuroticism) may conspire to heighten a women's risk for psychological distress, reduce their quality of life and also inhibit innate and anti tumor immune response against cancer. Earlier studies using various behavioral approaches have shown some benefit finding in these populations. Studies using various forms of Yoga intervention have also shown to improve quality of life, mood states, reduce stress symptoms and improve general well being in cancer patients. However, most of these studies have methodological problems with design, have smaller sample size, and have heterogeneity in cancer population and disease stage and lack effective controls.

Results

There was a significant decrease in anxiety states during radiotherapy and chemotherapy in the yoga group as compared to controls. There was a significant decrease in anxiety trait following surgery, radiotherapy and chemotherapy in the yoga group as compared to controls. Compared to control group, yoga group reported significant decrease in depression following surgery and during and following radiotherapy and chemotherapy. There was also a significant decrease in severity and distress of symptoms following surgery and decrease in number of symptoms, severity and distress, during and following radiotherapy and chemotherapy. There was also a significant improvement in overall quality of life at all follow-up assessments in yoga group, compared to controls. There was a significant decrease in post chemotherapy nausea frequency and intensity, and anticipatory vomiting and nausea intensity in yoga

group, compared to controls. There was a decrease in overall toxicity score in yoga group as compared to controls. Post operatively, yoga intervention significantly reduced duration of hospitalization; drain retention, interval for suture removal and postoperative complications. Yoga group had significantly higher CD56% counts and lesser plasma TNF alpha levels and serum IgA levels following surgery as compared to controls. Yoga group also showed significantly higher CD56% counts after 24 weeks of intervention than controls.

Conclusion

In brief the results support effects of yoga intervention in improving mood, quality of life, anti tumor immune responses, post operative outcomes, and reducing treatment related symptoms, nausea and vomiting and toxicity in early operable breast cancer patients undergoing conventional treatments.