



ISSN: 2319-6505

Available Online at <http://journalijcar.org>

International Journal of Current Advanced Research
Vol 5, Issue 4, pp 734-735, April 2016

International Journal
of Current Advanced
Research

ISSN: 2319 - 6475

SHORT COMMUNICATION

YOGA IN DENTAL PRACTICE; A NEW PERSPECTIVE

Khokhar Vijender^{1*}, Bhargava Saurabh², Sharma Raju³

¹Department of pedodontics and preventive dentistry Govt dental college and hospital Patiala, Punjab

²Department of Genetics, Maharshi Dayanand University, Rohtak, Haryana.

³Maharaja Ganga Singh Dental College and Hospital, Sri Ganga Nagar

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 16th January, 2016
Received in revised form 24th
February, 2016
Accepted 23rd March, 2016
Published online 28th
April, 2016

Key words:

Dentists, musculoskeletal pain, yoga, anxiety.

ABSTRACT

Yoga is a system physical exercises and therapy which originated in ancient India. It is an art which encompasses the physical, mental and spiritual practices for benefit of body, mind and spirit. Consistent practice of yoga can not only help to decrease stress and anxiety, but also improves the cognition and immunity of the body. There are case reports on the dentists being suffering from work related musculoskeletal pain. Yoga is versatile, enjoyable and highly beneficial and a great way for dentists and their patients to battle stress and anxiety and to decrease work related musculoskeletal pain.

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INTRODUCTION

The practice of yoga in the Indian subcontinent was documented as early as 3000 BC. Yoga is defined as a Hindu spiritual and ascetic discipline, a part of which, including breath control, simple meditation, and the adoption of specific bodily postures, is widely practiced for health and relaxation. The word 'yoga' is derived from Sanskrit word *yuz*, which is often interpreted as meaning 'union'. Yoga is said to be for purpose of uniting the mind, body and spirit. Yoga is the science of the mind and soul.

The physical practices of yoga, also known as *asanas*, are performed in the form various 'yoga postures'. Many researchers have found that yoga is effective for relieving stress and anxiety conditions that impact many physical and mental health conditions. Yoga is an ancient system of relaxation, exercise, and healing that has origins in Indian philosophy. As a system of healing, it takes a primary approach of creating the balance in body through developing both strength and flexibility. Yoga is often practiced by individuals for physical well-being and to achieve relaxation through stress management.

DISCUSSION

Dentistry is one of the professions that demands prolonged static position with limited mobility. Repeated prolonged static postures resisting gravity during their work are thought to initiate a series of events that could account for pain and injuries in dentists. This makes dental surgeons in a high risk of occupational postural & musculoskeletal problems. It is very necessary to counteract and balance these positions we put ourselves in, day in and out. Also the stress involved as

they are working through a long list of patients, and restrictions during the complicated treatment of procedures, has increased the need for introducing yoga as an aid to lead a healthy and balanced lifestyle.

The various profession hazards, the dental surgeon faces are the complications of the spine such as cervical spondylolysis, thoracic kyphosis, tendonitis, arthritis, etc. The others include pain in the leg due to unequal load owing to prolonged standing causing varicose veins in the lower limbs, eye problems due to continual, persistent concentration in the oral cavity even when the light is dim, skin diseases like contact dermatitis due to skin contact with hazardous dental materials. Also, the patients visiting the dentists are no short of anxiety by such stressful and elaborate dental procedure. The oral symptoms of stress such as canker sores, teeth grinding, gum diseases, TMJ disorders, burning mouth syndrome and dry mouth can be detected in the patients. The tension in the jaw muscle can cause jaw clenching and teeth grinding.

It can also cause the jaw to shift and thus can affect the alignment of the teeth. Dry mouth leads to halitosis, which causes decay and periodontal diseases. Long term stress can lead to chronically elevated levels of stress hormone cortisol, which can weaken the immune system. Halitosis and weakened immunity present favourable conditions for bacteria to colonise and thus invade the gums. The stress can exaggerate and cause tooth loss.

For dental professionals, it is necessary to improve the posture and condition of the body to prevent the injuries. *Bhujangasan* is one of the asanas which make the spine flexible and rejuvenates and revitalizes the spinal cord. After practising it, one feels relief and in most cases the backache is

gone. It also helps in the treatment of cervical spondylosis. *Padmasana* also work wonders for the spinal cord by keeping it erect, healthy and flexible. It keeps the lungs filled with oxygenated air and by keeping the diaphragm in proper position and also strengthens the legs by pulling the nerves, muscles and bones taut and thereby massaging thoroughly.

Sirshasana can help both normal and diseased eyes by producing increased blood circulation in the organ. It also prevents the development of long and short sightedness. Further, it also tones the muscles around the eye and giving them a new sparkle. *Vajrasana* helps in majority cases of varicose veins. Due to this asana, the blood flow to the lower limbs is reduced. Skin diseases occur due to allergy or poor resistance. The cure lies in strengthening the vital organs like the pituitary and thyroid glands.

Exercising like *sarvangasana*, *matsyasana*, *vipareetakarani mudra* and *pranayama* should be regularly performed. The best thing about yoga is that it is not rigorous and doesn't require long sessions, but can to be carried out during short breaks, in times between two patients, or while waiting for a filling to set. Consistently and appropriately done small bouts of yoga can prove to be as effective as long sessions. Another important factor is that yoga not only strengthens the musculoskeletal system but also decreases stress by releasing endorphins and other hormones, which is another contributing factor for the perception of musculoskeletal discomfort by an individual.

Children are motivated to perform yogic practices like *shitali* and *sheetkari prayanama* that produce correct alignment of teeth avoiding their irregular development. Yoga also helps in prevention and cure of lichen planus, a premalignant oral condition which is prevalent in today's modern lifestyle due to increased incidence of psychosomatic disorders.

Recently a useful clinical technique was used to facilitate the pterygomandibular nerve block technique. It is done by having the patients relax their shoulders and thus the pharyngeal and facial muscles, and, making the block more effective. The relaxed shoulders cause the buccinators muscle to relax as well as the needle to pass through the curtain of the buccinators where it attaches to the pterygomandibular raphe with relative ease and comfort.

Thus devoting 40-50 minutes on an average every day gives surprising results as one can remain fresh mentally and physically away from the professional hazards. The study by Koneru and Tanikonda (2015) found that yoga was more effective than other modes of physical activities like aerobics, brisk walk, sports, etc. They reported that 89.5% of yoga practitioners were free of musculoskeletal pain compared to those who didn't practice yoga. The reasons are multifactorial. Yoga allows the practitioners to be more regular, irrespective of the factors such as weather, climate, place, accessibility, availability of gymnasiums, cost incurred, etc. Yoga is a more controlled activity, whereas other activities are controlled not only by the individual but also by others during the activity of sports.

CONCLUSION

There is significant role of physical activity on the quality and quantity of work-related musculoskeletal pain experienced by dentists. Yoga is found to be more effective than other modes of physical activities because of its more controlled nature and its positive effect on the psychological stress and strain.

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