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IP International Journal of Medical Paediatrics and Oncology

Journal homepage: <https://www.ijmpo.com/>

## Editorial

# Life with Yoga for holistic health

Rakesh Sharma<sup>1</sup>, Prasuna Jelly<sup>1,\*</sup>, Anita Verma<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Dept. of of College of Nursing, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Rishikesh., Uttarakhand, India

<sup>2</sup>All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Rishikesh, Uttarakhand, India



### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received 20-06-2022

Accepted 27-06-2022

Available online 30-06-2022

#### Keywords:

Yoga

Holistic Health

Chronic diseases

Lifestyle diseases

### ABSTRACT

Yoga is a magical term which means and promotes the “union” of mind, body, and psychological status of human beings that goes beyond physical activity and exercise. Many countries address the integration of yoga in numerous meetings to find the solutions for the complex health-related situations and to bring harmony. Yoga possesses biological, psychological, and social benefits to promote humanity. Modern medical advancements recommend integrating alternative and traditional healing therapies to solve the health-related issues completely; yoga is one of the important and famous therapies adopted by many countries and populations. A healthy human needs regular physical activity and exercise, appropriate diet and nutrition, right thoughts, attitude, and proper recreational activities to maintain harmony. Yoga is the one package of solutions to provide all these dimensions that the entire world is looking for.

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## 1. Introduction

“Health and happiness are your birth rights. Do not forsake your golden culture for the plastic playthings of the modern world. Learn and live yoga, for then you will know true health and happiness.”

*Yogamaharishi Dr Swami Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj (1907-1993)*

*Founder ICYER at Ananda Ashram, Pondicherry*

Yoga is an art and science for healthy living. Yoga is a priceless gift of ancient Indian tradition in the ambition to exemplify the unity of “mind and body; thought and action; restraint and fulfilment; harmony between man and nature; a holistic approach to health and well-being”.<sup>1</sup> Yoga is not about exercise but discovering a sense of coherence with ourselves, the world; nature by changing our lifestyles and making awareness, which can help us to deal with environmental variations. The world decided to

honor the glorious practice of yoga by giving it forward to international recognition.<sup>1,2</sup>

The term “Yoga” actually means “union”; of “the body, mind, and emotions” that goes much more than any physical activity and exercise. It includes different postures (asanas), breathing techniques (pranayamas) and hand gestures” or “attitude (mudras); which are performed and practiced under the supervision of a trained instructor. Lifestyle aspects like positive thinking, congruence, serenity, and gratitude are attained by daily practice of yoga; which are vital aspects of physical health (Figure 1).<sup>2,3</sup> yoga is one of the best choices who want to approach holistic physical and mental well-being. Yoga alone is considered a holistic healthcare system because it harmonizes the mind and body to work together.<sup>4</sup>

The process of empowering individuals to progress toward improved health and well-being through the application of the teachings and practices of Yoga is considered to be Yoga therapy by the International Association of Yoga Therapists”. Yoga provides integrative

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [prasunajelly@gmail.com](mailto:prasunajelly@gmail.com) (P. Jelly).

health through which one can understand and work on multiple domains of health as physical, psychological, cognitive, social, and spiritual domains.<sup>2,4-6</sup> The overall health of a human being is achieved by mindful practice, continuous, disciplined periods of calm and focussed activity, and balanced hormonal, mitochondrial, enzymatic, and adrenal activity within the body; all of these are possible with yoga along with reducing stress levels. Yoga helps to keep up these bodily functions when our age increases also.<sup>2,6,7</sup>

## 2. Scientific Evidence

Biologically, yoga is scientifically proven to improve physical health, enhance the immune system and stress response, and reduce the inflammatory response and even genetic expression. Yoga has been shown to have positive impacts on pain-related impairment and mental health in a number of high-quality randomised clinical studies (RCTs).<sup>8</sup> Also, it helps to develop psychological aspects such as, metacognition, self-regulation, compassion for self and others; building resilience & coping skills.<sup>1,9,10</sup> Additionally, improves the quality of life, social function, level of acceptance, and enhanced connections & relationships with others; as a whole, improvement in social life. Apart from that, yoga is scientifically proven to improve the spiritual health of being a balanced human being by understanding the meaning and purpose of life.<sup>4,5,10</sup> Yoga could be useful as a supportive or adjunct treatment that is quite cost-effective, could be practised by individuals as a self-care behavioural modality, provides a lifelong behavioural skill, augments self-efficacy and self-assurance, and is frequently associated with additional positivity as a whole.<sup>8</sup>

## 3. Need for Yoga in the Daily Life

Today's world is with many devastating chronic diseases connected to age, environment, and profligate lifestyle, such as osteoporosis, diabetes, cancer, cardiovascular diseases, chronic respiratory disorders and many work-related physical and psychological health problems etc.<sup>11-16</sup> Healing, health, and permanency are seriously promoted in modern medical advanced practice by integrating numerous traditional healing techniques including yoga. It is important to integrate to fight against present challenges in health care delivery. The ancient times of yoga have to be merged with the revolutions of modern medicine to enhance the quality of life globally. Preventive, promotive, and rehabilitative practices can be achieved through yoga in the treatment of acute illness, chronic diseases, and communicable diseases, which is the focus of modern medicine.<sup>6,7,17</sup>

The necessity of the modern era is to welcome an integrated approach to health and to practice yoga in coordination and partnership with other systems

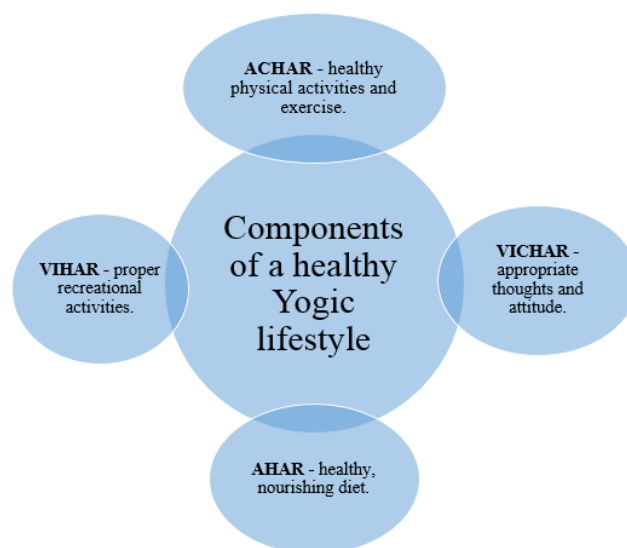


Fig. 1: Components of a healthy Yogic lifestyle

of treatment approaches such as “Allopathy, Ayurveda, Siddha, and Naturopathy, Physiotherapy, osteopathy, and chiropractic practices” (if needed); modification in diet and lifestyle is very essential. The most significant health pandemic in the last ten years, COVID-19, has presented the biggest challenge to the global population. Concern among the public and the government arose from the virus’ frightening rate of transmission as well as the high morbidity and fatality rates experienced globally. The epidemic not only affected the health sector but also each and every member of society on a social and economic level. But during the epidemic, yoga’s popularity and practises rose dramatically. The Health Ministry released a number of recommendations to help the populace maintain their health according to which Ayurveda and yoga can assist to enhance immunity and as per current knowledge of COVID-19, it is essential to maintain a robust immune system for both prevention and defence against COVID-19 disease.<sup>18</sup>

### 3.1. Role of yoga in an integrative approach to holistic health.<sup>1,2,4,19</sup>

1. Regular yoga practice prevents neuro-degenerative disease and improves memory and cognitive function by improving the connection between nerve cells in the brain; also increases the size of the brain.
2. Yoga asana requires one to practice self-awareness and mindfulness, which improves focus on life.
3. Yoga supports spinal health and promotes good posture, decreasing chronic back pain and reducing the risk of back injury.
4. Yoga balances the stress response by decreasing the heart and breath rate, dropping blood pressure, and improving blood flow to the cells and organs.

5. Yoga helps to promote healthy ageing.
6. Yoga promotes brain health by emotional balance at a psychological level.
7. Yoga improves digestive capacity, eventually improves the body's capability to engross nutrients, and strengthens the immune system.
8. Yoga also increases the production of happy hormones (oxytocin and endorphins).
9. It helps in healthy pregnancy outcomes and by minimising complications during pregnancy, delivery and postnatal period.

#### 4. Conclusion

The ancient art and science of yoga have endless opportunities for resolutions to health-related problems. Lifestyle alterations, such as welcoming yoga and dietary modification, can be sluggish or even converse numerous symptoms of chronic illness like heart disease, cancer, and much more. Undiagnosed diseases in the medical field are cured by practicing regular yoga along with other modalities of treatment. This is because holistic and integrative medicines answer symptomatic imbalances in the human body and maintain harmony.

#### 5. Conflict of Interest

None.

#### 6. Source of Funding

None.

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#### Author biography

**Rakesh Sharma**, Assistant Professor  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8627-4517>

**Prasuna Jelly**, Assistant Professor  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4974-6167>

**Anita Verma**, PhD Scholar

**Cite this article:** Sharma R, Jelly P, Verma A. Life with Yoga for holistic health. *IP Int J Med Paediatr Oncol* 2022;8(2):54–56.