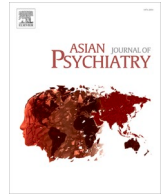




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Letter to the Editor

“It is the best part of our Hospital life”: A Qualitative analysis on the impact of Yoga and Naturopathy as a Complementary therapy in the management of COVID-19



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Dear Sir,

The psychological distress instigated due to the COVID-19 pandemic is huge. Multiple factors such as ill-health, loss of loved ones, anxiety about the near future, fear of death, relationship issues, loss of social interaction, job insecurity, loss of livelihood, etc. could be attributed to the psychological distress during the pandemic (Rajkumar, 2020). Therefore, managing psychological and emotional wellbeing is equally important in the management of patients with COVID-19. Yoga and Naturopathy is one of the widely practiced complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) therapy in India (Maheshkumar et al., 2020) which is documented to be beneficial in management of the COVID-19 pandemic as well (Jasti et al., 2020; Jerrin et al., 2021; Prabu et al., 2021; Ransing et al., 2020). We qualitatively assessed the impact of ‘Yoga & Naturopathy’ therapies on 51 diagnosed COVID-19 patients (16 female and 35 male) who took Yoga & Naturopathy as a complementary therapy during their stay at a dedicated COVID care hospital. Qualified Yoga and Naturopathy doctors provided the interventions as proposed in the advisory, on a daily basis for a period of seven days (Prabu et al., 2021). Feedbacks were obtained through semi-structured interviews and the responses were manually coded independently by two researchers (VV and MK). Sub-themes and themes were extracted from the codes and the final step involved conceptualisation of broader ideas that emerged from the themes. Specific notable quotations were also extracted to highlight the themes identified. The major themes identified include reasons for practicing, perceived benefits and suggestions/feedbacks (Ref. Table 1).

1. Reasons for practising

The major motivation and reasons for COVID-19 patients to participate in the yoga and Naturopathy sessions is to reduce distress and improve their physical, psychological and emotional wellbeing. Participants mentioned that due to various misinformation and lack of specific treatments available for COVID-19, they had feeling of hopelessness and increased fear of death.

“Before coming here, I was hopeless and felt very much stressed due to this novel disease. But after coming for yoga sessions, yoga filled my mind and (I am) feeling very much positive towards life”

“In the midst of the crisis we are all facing, the yoga sessions were really a good way to relax ourselves...”

“When I (got) admitted in this hospital, I was having some stress but now I am completely relaxed because of your class and this hospital support”

2. Perceived benefits

2.1. Physical

Breathing difficulty is one of the major discomfort experienced by the patients during COVID and they felt sessions to be beneficial in overcoming the breathing difficulty. Improvement in sleep pattern was also mentioned by many respondents. Other notable benefits experienced by the patients include improved awareness towards physical health and improvement in overall energy levels at physical level.

“When I first came to the hospital, tested positive for covid -19, I was very tired and there was a lot of difficulty for me in breathing... with yoga & naturopathy treatments, there is a lot of changes within me both mentally and physically...”

“I have felt my breathing problem has improved”

“I feel heart trouble (palpitation) and unable to sleep. I should admit that in the last week I slept very peacefully and those stress episodes almost never happened.”

2.2. Psychological

Most respondents mentioned that they felt improvement at both physical and mental levels. Psychological stress such as anxiety and stress is commonly attributed to COVID-19 and the yoga sessions along with Naturopathy treatments were found to improve confidence and reduce overall stress levels in the respondents.

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Table 1
Details of the themes and subthemes.

Codes	Sub-themes	Themes
15	Stress & anxiety	Reasons for practising
11	Breathing difficulty	Perceived benefits
18	Overcome negativity	Suggestions
14	Physical wellbeing	
21	Emotion	
16	Need of the hour	
28	Gratitude	
17	Happiness	
18	Overwhelming	
10	Novel approach	
9	Holistic	
11	To benefit others	

"...felt relaxed and stress-free after attending the sessions during this difficult COVID situation"

"Spending nearly an hour here at yoga class really makes a positive vibration in the mid of this corona positive days"

2.3. Emotional

The respondents mentioned that the sessions were beneficial in improving their emotional wellbeing as well. They expressed that they are able to control and manage their emotions in a better way after the sessions. One respondent has mentioned that the sessions helped develop a positive interest on himself. Yoga sessions in specific was perceived to keep the patients cheerful and help cope up with their stress better. Most importantly, they felt that the sessions helped improve their self-esteem and positivity. Their level of confidence towards a possible recovery seems to have been greatly improved because of the sessions.

"...class I am feeling relaxed and it is useful for me to control my emotions and feelings"

"Before coming here, I was hopeless and felt very much stressed due to this novel disease. But after coming for yoga section, it filled (me with) positive energy in mind and (I am) feeling much positive towards life"

"...brings up confidence level and also make me feel positive, energetic and stay confident"

"...helps us to cope up with stress and keeps (us) cheerful"

"...they are not very strenuous and strict, but on the contrary they are explorative and fun"

3. Suggestions/feedbacks

The respondents thanked the doctors for their support in helping them improve their physical and mental health during the tough times of COVID. A respondent expressed that it is a memorable moment that he will never forget in his life. One respondent went to the extreme of saying that his experience during the yoga and naturopathy sessions as the best part of his hospital life, a relaxation from the monotonous routine hospital treatments. The need for addressing psychological and emotional wellbeing is emphasized by the respondents not just in the management of COVID, but also in other diseases, wishing that Yoga & Naturopathy therapies should be used as a complementary therapy in all the hospitals to ensure totality of health at physical, mental and emotional levels.

The respondents also mentioned that 'Yoga and Naturopathy' should be implemented in all the institutes to overcome the modern public health challenges. They expressed their sincere gratitude to the host institution in which they underwent the treatment was conducted and also the Government of Tamilnadu, because of their novel thought to include a complementary system of medicine along with conventional medicine which made them better and recover quickly.

"It is the best part of our hospital life...."

"...I will never forget this memorable moment... when all across the world (there is) panic for covid-19, yoga is the only one hope to relax and maintain the steady-state in human life"

"... these treatments are really important and should be implemented in all the institute to overcome the new medical issues happening the people nowadays"

"...I would like this to spread across in every part of world to encourage people to drag out the people from their sorrow of this pandemic"

"It was good that the hospital & management thought something else apart from medicines could benefit to this extent and quickly recover"

"...kudos to the team and all the best really thankful for their gigantic help in these difficult times"

Yoga and Naturopathy treatments played a remarkable role in improving the psychological wellbeing and also morale of the COVID-19 patients. The positivity and optimism expressed by the patients after undergoing the therapies is something remarkable and a humbling experience for the whole team. Just as mentioned by the patients, including scientifically-backed evidence-based CAM therapies like Yoga & Naturopathy would help in improving the psychological and emotional wellbeing of patients not only during times of epidemic/pandemic, but also in the management of chronic non-communicable disorders (NCDs).

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Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors report no declarations of interest.

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