

Yoga May Ease Back Pain, Elderly Insomnia

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AsianScientist (Aug. 24, 2012) - Two recent studies have highlighted the health benefits of yoga, which range from treating chronic or recurrent low back pain, to helping elderly people with insomnia.

In the first study, also [U.K.'s largest ever study](#) of the benefits of yoga, researchers from the University of York showed that specialized group yoga classes could provide a cost-effective way of treating patients with chronic or recurrent low back pain.

The results of the study, published in the journal *Spine*, showed that the yoga intervention program – ‘Yoga for Healthy Lower Backs’ - is likely to be cost effective for both the U.K. National Health Service (NHS) and wider society.

In the trial, a group of 156 people were offered group yoga classes over 12 weeks specially designed to improve back function, while a second control group of 157 people received conventional general practitioner (GP) care alone.

Researchers found that those taking part in the yoga program had far fewer days off work than those in the control group. On average, a control group participant reported 12 days off due to back pain, whereas those in the yoga group had four days off. The cost associated with taking time off was £1,202 for a control group member, compared with £374 for a yoga group member.

“While yoga has been shown as an effective intervention for treating chronic and low back pain, until now there has been little evidence on its cost effectiveness,” said Chief Investigator Professor David Torgerson, Director of York Trials Unit, in the University of York’s Department of Health Sciences.

In a second study, researchers found that regular traditional yoga practice benefits elderly people with insomnia, a debilitating problem and one of the most frequent health complaints in the elderly.

The study, carried out in 74 people aged 60 to 87, showed that practicing physical and meditative yoga as well as daily home practice of meditative yoga for at least 25 minutes daily for 12 weeks improved participants' sleep and enhanced their psychological and emotional wellbeing.

Medical practitioner and RMIT University Professor Marc Cohen, who supervised the research, said the findings showed yoga was an effective, affordable, and safe exercise for older people with insomnia.

"We wanted to explore this because insomnia impairs daily function, reduces quality of life, and is

a risk factor for other health issues for older people," Cohen said. "Drugs used to help treat this condition are only recommended for short-term use and have limited effectiveness."

Source: [University of York](#); [RMIT](#).

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