Yoga Therapy In Pediatrics.

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Article ID: WMC003506
Article Type: My opinion
Article URL: http://www.webmedcentral.com/article_view/3506
Subject Categories: MEDICAL EDUCATION
Keywords: Yoga, Pain, Pediatrics, Asthma

How to cite the article: Varma C, Raju P. Yoga Therapy In Pediatrics. . WebmedCentral: Education in Medicine Journal 2012;3(6):WMC003506

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Source(s) of Funding:
None

Competing Interests:
None

Education in Medicine Journal is an associate journal of Webmedcentral.
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My opinion

INTRODUCTION: Yoga is an ancient science which has its origins in India. The term yoga literally means to "yoke" from the sanskrit word yug. Yoga if practiced correctly can help in the improvement of many childhood disorders.

MENTAL HEALTH: Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a behavioural disorder, present in up to 5% of school children characterised by inattentiveness, hyperactivity, impulsivity or a combination. These children usually have normal intelligence but poor school performance. Stimulant drugs like amphetamines and Ritalin are used but one third of the children do not respond or develop side effects to these medications. Behavioural modification is one other treatment modality. Yoga is being increasingly used as an alternative therapy. It enhances relaxation, develops greater attention and ability to concentrate and improves self esteem. It also reduces depression, anxiety, anger and neurotic symptoms. Studies have shown that practicing yoga regularly improves ADHD symptoms significantly when compared to children on drug and behavioural therapy. Yoga also helps in improving mood disorders in adolescents. Yoga may also improve visual and cognitive skills, memory and visual perception.

PHYSICAL HEALTH: Moorthy et al demonstrated that yoga increased the number of children that were able to pass a fitness test which they failed to clear the first time. Studies have proved that regular yoga helps in improving the cardiovascular fitness, increase the lean muscle mass, improve balance and fine motor skills. Raju et al demonstrated that regular pranayama could result in higher work rates with reduced oxygen consumption without an increase in the blood lactate levels.

RESPIRATORY DISORDERS: Asthma is one of the most common conditions encountered in pediatric practice. It has multiple aetiologies including allergic, infective, climactic, endocrinal and emotional. The children are usually put on long term drugs and inhalational devices which are very cumbersome. Jain et al showed that regular yoga increased pulmonary functions and lung capacity in adolescents with asthma. It also decreased frequency and severity of symptoms and drug requirements. Deep breathing exercises and the calm mental state help in ameliorating most of the multi aetiologies of this condition. Yoga also helps in improving the lung capacities of children with congenital chest deformities.

PAIN MANAGEMENT: Children with oncological conditions, fibromyalgia, juvenile arthritis, chronic pancreatitis, peripheral neuropathy and hemodialysis are prone to chronic pain and anxiety. Moody et al put children in their hemato-oncological unit on an individualised yoga plan and found a significant reduction in both pain and anxiety. Children with musculoskeletal problems like arthritis have been shown to have decreased stiffness, pain and prevalence of deformity when on yoga therapy.

OTHER CONDITIONS: Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS), migraines, endocrinological disorders like diabetes and sleep disorders are some of the other conditions where yoga is helpful. More studies are required to quantify the degree of usefulness of yoga therapy in dealing with conditions which require an alternative therapy.

Conclusion

Yoga is a holistic therapy that aims at removal of the basic cause of any disease. In yoga the mind is considered central to any diseased condition and strives to return the human body to a state of inner equilibrium. Yoga therapy would be very useful as an adjuvant therapy for many conditions to which modern medicine has only a partial answer.

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