

Chronic low back pain: Can Yoga as an integrative approach be the best way forward?

Spoorthi Poojari^a, Babita Ghai^{b*}, Kashinath Metri^c, Sheetal Jindal Gupta^d, Prashant Verma^e

^aS-VYASA Yoga University, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India

^bDepartment of Anaesthesiology and Intensive Care, PGIMER, Chandigarh, India

^cCentral University of Rajasthan, Bandar Sindri, Ajmer, Rajasthan, India

^dS-VYASA Yoga University, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India

^eNeuroscience Research Lab, PGIMER, Chandigarh, India

KEY WORDS

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ABSTRACT

Chronic Low Back pain (CLBP) is common public health problem, and globally one of the leading cause of disability. Several research studies advocate Yoga may add on as an effective therapy for CLBP patients. The present case study is an attempt to elucidate the outcome of Integrated Approach of Yoga Therapy (IAYT) intervention (which included loosening practices, asanas with breathing, relaxation, pranayama and meditation techniques) as an adjunct and integrative therapy to reduce pain symptoms, pain-associated disability and their overall quality of life in CLBP adult patients. The manuscript illustrates the two CLBP patients, refractory to conservative management, visiting pain clinic at Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER), Chandigarh, India. Both the patients received a series of 60 minutes IAYT class conducted for a span of 15 days along with the institutional usual care regime as their treatment protocol. Patients were evaluated at baseline, 1 month and 3 month using various assessment tools (for pain intensity, disability, neuropathic pain component, quality of life, pain experiences, mental health, fear of movements and overall clinical benefit). Both the patients showed steady and gradual progression in reducing their pain intensity and its associated disability, quality of life and mental health. The patients narrated their experience and their ability to manage bio-psycho-socio aspects associated with CLBP. They attributed their positive changes to IAYT protocol.

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*Corresponding Author:

Babita Ghai, MD

Department of Anaesthesiology
and Intensive Care, PGIMER
Chandigarh, India.

Contact no: +91-7087009533

E-mail: ghaibabita1@gmail.com

Introduction

Chronic Low back pain (CLBP), is a common public health problem and a leading cause of disability worldwide (1,2). Globally, low back pain has prevailed to be one of the top four leading causes of Years lived with Disability (YLDs), as calculated by the Global Burden of Disease 2017 study (3). Also alarming is the incidence of low back pain (LBP) in India, as back and neck pain is ranked second leading cause of YLDs after iron deficiency anaemia with nearly 60 percent of individuals suffering from it at some point during their lives (3,4). CLBP impacts all aspects of life including biological, psychological, social, functional and financial. Various treatment options are available for CLBP management. However, there is insufficient or conflicting evidence about these modalities (5). As these modalities mainly focus on biomedical aspect of pain they usually miss the *mind-body aspect*. Pharmacological methods seem inadequate as a sole treatment to CLBP (5). Research studies showcase that Integrated Approach of Yoga Therapy (IAYT) can be a potential add-on and synergistic culmination for an effective management in CLBP (6–8).

Its approach and possibilities are very similar to Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) technique, which has

been undertaken for back pain and other conditions by more than 18,000 Americans (9,10). The current cases illustrate the positive outcome of IAYT intervention to reduce pain symptoms and pain-associated disability in CLBP adult patients.

Case presentation

Recruitment of patient

Patients with a history of low back pain with or without radicular pain for more than 3 months, who were refractory to previous conservative management, were recruited at the pain clinic Out-Patient Department of Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER), Chandigarh run by the Department of Anaesthesiology and Intensive care. The initial evaluation was based on the usual practice of physician assessment based on symptoms and radio-diagnostic methods. Patients written consent were obtained prior to their enrolment for IAYT sessions.

IAYT (Integrated Approach of Yoga Therapy) Protocol

Both the patients were given IAYT as an adjunct treatment along with the Institutional Conventional regime (back

