



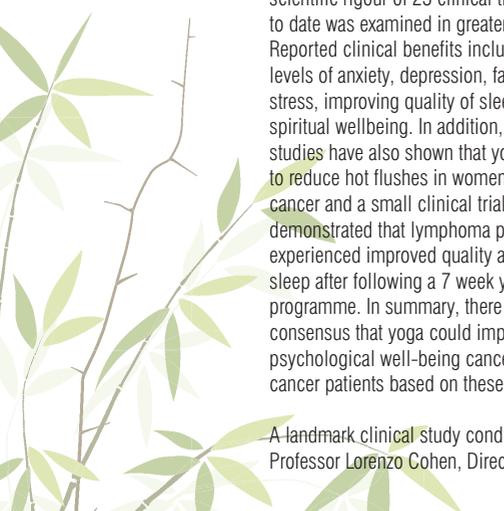
Yoga's role in supporting cancer patients and survivor recovery

by Dr Jimmy Kwok

A review of the benefits that yoga might bring to cancer patients and survivors were conducted by CRUK in 2012, where the scientific rigour of 23 clinical trials performed to date was examined in greater detail. Reported clinical benefits included reduced levels of anxiety, depression, fatigue and stress, improving quality of sleep, mood and spiritual wellbeing. In addition, some clinical studies have also shown that yoga may be able to reduce hot flushes in women with breast cancer and a small clinical trial has also demonstrated that lymphoma patients had experienced improved quality and duration of sleep after following a 7 week yoga programme. In summary, there is a general consensus that yoga could improve the psychological well-being cancer recovery for cancer patients based on these studies.

A landmark clinical study conducted by Professor Lorenzo Cohen, Director of the

Integrative Medicine Programme at The University of Texas, MD Anderson Cancer Centre suggested that yoga can benefit cancer patients undergoing radiotherapy. The study recruited 163 women with stage 0 – 3 breast cancer lasting over a 6 month period. They underwent 6 weeks of radiotherapy and were randomly assigned into 3 groups which received different add-on instructions apart from their standard course of radiotherapy. Group 1 received 3 hourly Yoga sessions per week; Group 2 received 3 hourly simple stretching exercise regimes per week; Group 3 acted as a control group who received neither Yoga nor stretching regimes. The most significant finding here is that women who practised Yoga registered the sharpest fall in a stress hormone - Cortisol (hydrocortisone). Cortisol is normally produced by the adrenal gland in response to stress. This is of particular importance because 'blunted circadian cortisol rhythm' – a high level of



blood cortisol levels in the body have been linked to worse outcomes in breast cancer. Unsurprisingly women who practised yoga also reported qualitatively that they have better general health, physical functioning and psychological wellbeing. Professor Cohen cited that "Teaching patients a mind-body technique like Yoga as a coping skill can make the transition less difficult." What is more important is that the National Cancer Institute in USA has awarded the largest grant to date to the study of Yoga in Cancer to Professor

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Cohen's team to conduct a further Phase III clinical trial for breast cancer patients to determine the scientific mechanism of how yoga can effect a better biological outcomes post radiotherapy treatments. They are also going to assess the cost efficiencies of implementing yoga programmes in hospitals. To date, this is the known phase III clinical trial going to be performed to address how Yoga can benefit breast cancer patients.

In addition, a recent study in 2015 conducted by the University of Rochester Medical Center, New York looked at secondary data analysis of all-US nationwide multi-site, phase II/III randomized controlled clinical trial examining the efficacy of yoga for improving musculoskeletal symptoms among breast cancer survivors receiving hormone therapy has shown that participants in the yoga group demonstrated greater reductions in musculoskeletal symptoms such as general pain, muscle aches and total physical discomfort. The findings are consistent with

an earlier study published by the School of Nursing, University of Pittsburgh states that Exercise in a variety of intensities and forms, including yoga for people recovering from advanced stages of cancer exercise can decrease anxiety, stress, and depression while improving levels of pain, fatigue, shortness of breath, constipation and insomnia. They have also strongly suggested that people diagnosed with cancer should discuss with their oncologist safe and easy ways they can incorporate exercises like yoga into their daily lives.

There are also other numerous studies which have demonstrated yoga might benefit cancer survivors and patients suffering from all types of cancer including lung cancer, prostate, skin and ovarian cancer where the side effects of chemotherapy and radiotherapies are similar.

In the UK, Maggie's Cancer Centre has been advocating the use of Yoga as part of a range of complementary programmes to help cancer patient survivor and recovery for a number of years now.

Dr Jimmy Kwok, Head of Oncology Service for Hospital Corporation America, UK has worked passionately worked with yoga instructor Denise Hopkins to produce bespoke yoga DVDs for cancer patients and those in recovery. For every DVD sold through www.amazon.co.uk or www.yogaseeker.co.uk - 10% of the sales will be donated to the cancer charity group Maggie's which supports people through the impact of a diagnosis and empowering them with hope and determination through treatment and beyond. The centres create calm and uplifting spaces for those affected by all kinds of cancer where a warm welcome is assured for all those on the cancer journey, including at the end of life and in bereavement.

Contact your local centre if you need further assistance in purchasing the DVDs. There are two DVDs available, suitable for all levels including beginners which are titled 'Healing yoga for cancer patients and survivors' and 'Yoga for breast cancer patients and survivors'.



Further details from:

www.yogaseeker.co.uk
www.maggiescentres.org



Dr. Jimmy Kwok holds a doctorate degree in Clinical Oncology and he is also registered RYT200 yoga instructor with Yoga Alliance UK. He is currently working with Maggie's cancer centre in the UK to publish a yoga manual for cancer survivors and patients across the UK.