

Researchers at Oregon Health and Science University suggests that yoga can better relieve symptoms and improve function in fibromyalgia patients compared to the standard care.

The trial results published in the Nov issue of PAIN showed patients with fibromyalgia patients in a yoga of awareness program experienced significantly greater improvement in fibromyalgia symptoms and function compared to patients on a standard care program.

Fibromyalgia is a medical condition in which patients feel chronic widespread pain and allodynia. In addition to pain, patients can also experience debilitating fatigue, sleep disturbance and joint stiffness, difficult with swallowing, bowel and bladder abnormalities among other things.

According to a press release by Elsevier Health Sciences, fibromyalgia affects about 11 million people in the United States. The drug therapies are only 30 percent effective in relieving symptoms and 20 percent effective in improving function.

In the trial, James W. Carson, PhD and colleagues at OHSU enlisted 53 women ages 21 or older who were diagnosed with fibromyalgia by American College of Rheumatology criteria for at least three months. Twenty-five participants participated in the Yoga of Awareness program and the rest participated in the standard care program.

The Yoga of Awareness program used in the trial was tailor-made to address pain, fatigue, sleep disturbance, and emotional distress in fibromyalgia patients.

At the end of the trial, both groups of patients were evaluated for fibromyalgia symptoms and functional deficits. Women assigned to the yoga of awareness program showed significantly greater improvements on measures of fibromyalgia symptoms and function including pain, fatigue, and mood.

Tai-Chi also good for fibromyalgia

Another recent study published this month in the New England Journal of Medicine suggests that Tai chi may also be a useful treatment for fibromyalgia.

Chenchen Wang, M.D., M.P.H., at Tufts University School of Medicine in Boston and colleagues compared two groups of patients, one assigned classic Yang-style tai chi 60 minutes per session and 2 sessions per week and the other standard care for fibromyalgia for 12 weeks.

At 12 weeks, patients were assessed for a change in the fibromyalgia impact Questionnaire (FIQ) score and for summary scores on the physical and mental components of the Medical Outcomes Study 36-item Short-Form Health Survey. At 24 weeks, the assessments were repeated.

Among those practicing tai-chi, the FIQ score dropped to 35.1 at 12 weeks from 62.0 at baseline and among the controls, the FIQ score dropped to 58.6 at 12 weeks from 68.0 at baseline.

The SF-36 physical component scores were also better improved in the study group than the control group. For those on tai-chi, the score increased from 28.5 to 37 and for those on the standard care, the score increased from 28.0 to 29.4.

All these improvements were maintained at 24 weeks.

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