

STUDENTS' FEEDBACK ON YOGA TRAINING AS PART OF THE FOUNDATION COURSE IN THE MBBS CURRICULUM

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ABSTRACT

Objectives: The objective of this study is to take responses in the form of feedback from the students with regard to yoga training during the foundation course (FC).

Methods: It was a cross-sectional study. After taking consent from the students, the data were collected using self-administered and semi-structured questionnaires. The feedback form with the FC was distributed to all the newly joined 1st year MBBS students of MGM Medical College, Jamshedpur, Jharkhand, India.

Results: The majority (48.84%) of 1st year MBBS students liked Dhyana. All the participants agreed that yoga benefitted them.

Conclusion: Yoga helped students reduce stress and anxiety and improve overall physical health. It should be continued in MBBS foundation curriculum.

Keywords: Medical student, Mental health, Medical education, Meditation, Yoga.

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INTRODUCTION

To make medical education outcome-based, a new competency-based medical education (CBME) Curriculum for Indian Medical Graduates has been implemented. The characteristic of this CBME is a 1-month foundation course (FC) which is implemented during the 1st month of first professional MBBS studies. The goal of the FC is to familiarize students with local environment and prepare students for further study. The FC is divided into six modules, that is, orientation module, skills module, community orientation module, professional development and ethics module (P and E), enhancement of language and computer skills module, and sports and extracurricular activities [1,2].

The syllabus of the undergraduate medical curriculum is vast covering a period of 5½ years including internship. Medical students experience a multitude of stressors during the entire curriculum including burnout, social stress, stress due to examinations, etc. [3,4]. In view of these and overall well-being of medical students, since 2022 yoga has been included for 10 days in FC as a part of medical education in India, particularly in the context of promoting holistic healthcare practices.

Yoga is a mind-body practice that has been shown to have numerous health benefits, including reducing stress, improving mental health, and lowering the risk of chronic diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, and heart disease. As such, it can be a valuable tool for medical students to incorporate into their lifestyle and promote overall wellness.

In recent years, there has been an increasing recognition of the importance of integrating complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) into mainstream medical practice. Yoga, as a CAM practice, could potentially play a role in this integration.

However, it is important to note that any inclusion of yoga in medical education should be evidence-based and taught by qualified instructors. In addition, it should not be seen as a replacement for conventional

medical treatments but rather as a complementary approach to promoting overall health and well-being.

With this background, the objective of the present study was to get students' feedback on yoga training being imparted as part of the FC in the MBBS curriculum.

METHODS

During first year MBBS foundation classes, 10 days of yoga training was imparted to MBBS students of the 2022–2027 batch students in the morning by a certified yoga instructor in the college premises. The yoga session was organized by Physiology Department of M. G. M. Medical College. The 45 min training sessions of yoga included loosening exercises, asanas, pranayam, and meditation every day. Fig. 1 shows the details of the program. Medical Education Unit faculty facilitated all the sessions and motivated students to participate actively. Students' feedback was obtained in a predesigned semi structured questionnaire after 10 days of yoga training. Eighty-six students voluntarily participated in this study after giving written informed consent for the same. Statistical analysis was performed using Microsoft Excel and Epi Info.

RESULTS

A total of 86 students were included in the study. Out of 86 students, 45 were girls and 41 were boys. It was found that out of 86 study subjects, 48.84% of students liked dhyana in yoga whereas 25.58% of students liked pranayama, 13.95% of students liked asanas, and remaining 11.63% of students liked loosening exercises in yoga (Table 1).

The majority (95.34%) of the students agreed that yoga should be continued in MBBS curriculum. The majority (56.10%) of students opined that yoga should be included in MBBS curriculum for 1 year and only 2.44% agreed that yoga should be included in MBBS curriculum for 10 days (Table 2).

S. No.	Types of practice	Duration
1	Prayer in meditative posture (Namaskara mudra)	3 min
2	Loosening exercise (neck, shoulder, trunk, and knee movements)	10 min
3	Asanas (specific yoga postures) Tadasana (palm tree posture) Vrikshasana (tree pose) Padahasthasana (hand to foot pose standing forward bend) Ardha chakrasana (standing backward bend pose) Bhadrasana (butterfly pose) Vajrasana (thunderbolt pose) Ustrasana (half camel pose/full camel pose) Bhujangaasana (cobra pose) Halasana (plough pose) Singhasana (lion pose) Shava asana (corpse pose)	10 min
4	Pranayama Kapalabhati/forceful exhalations Anulom vilom/alternate nostril breathing Ujayani Bhramari/bee breathing	10 min
5	Dhyana (in meditative posture with closed eyes)	10 min
6	End of yoga practice session with a sankalp	2 min
	Total duration	45 min

Fig. 1: Yoga protocol

All (100%) of the students said that yoga has benefited them. All the students were asked how many times will they practice yoga at home? The majority (41.86%) of them answered that they will practice yoga daily. Only 4.65% of students said that they will never practice yoga at home (Fig. 2 and Table 3).

DISCUSSION

The majority of students in our study opined that yoga helped them reduce stress. Many studies report that yoga helps in stress reduction. According to a study published in the Indian Journal of Physiology and Pharmacology, yoga is not only useful in decreasing the basal anxiety levels in medical students but it also attenuates the increase in anxiety in students who may be experiencing life stressors such as examinations and academic pressure. [3]. Simard and Henry conducted a pilot study on fourteen 1st year medical students. Their study concludes that students reported improvements in overall health, perceived stress, and depressive symptoms following the yoga intervention [5]. In addition to stress reduction, physical benefits of yoga include decrease in musculoskeletal pain including low back pain, headaches, neck pain, and wrist discomfort [3,5-7]. Prasad *et al.* conducted a study on medical students. The study participants showed a statistically significant improvement in relaxation, calmness, stamina, and exhaustion. This can be beneficial for students who may be sitting for long periods of time in class and at home. Yoga can also improve concentration and focus, which can be helpful for students who need to stay alert and focused during lectures and exams [8].

The majority (56.10%) of the students in our study suggested that yoga should be included in the curriculum for a year. Sunita *et al.* found that a short-term (6 weeks in our study) program is helpful in improving mental health, a sustained yoga program for more time further improves mental health. Hence, the meditation, pranayam, or yoga program may be continued for maintaining the mental health of the medical students. Stakeholders may think about incorporating a guided program into the undergraduate medical curriculum [4].

Finally, yoga can also improve overall physical health. Regular yoga practice has been shown to improve cardiovascular health, respiratory

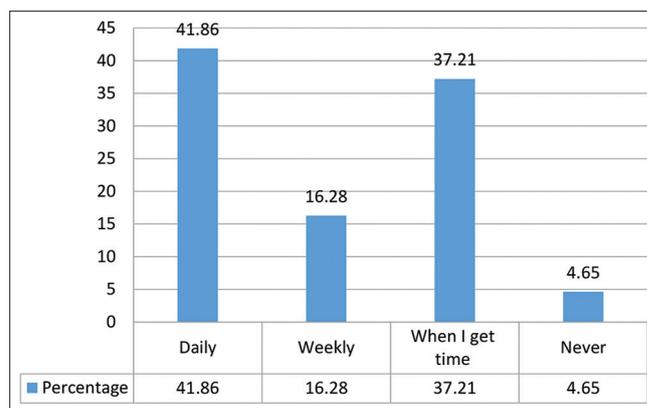


Fig. 2: Denotes distribution of study subjects as per their preference to continue practicing yoga at home

Table 1: Distribution of study subjects according to their liking of the yoga sessions

Session	Frequency	Percentage
Loosening exercise	10	11.63
Asanas	12	13.95
Pranayama	22	25.58
Dhyanana/meditation	42	48.84

Table 2: Distribution of study subjects according to their preference for the duration of yoga in MBBS curriculum

Duration	Frequency	Percentage
10 days	2	2.44
30 days	26	31.71
6 months	8	9.76
1 year	46	56.10

Table 3: Major themes that emerged from students' open-ended responses regarding the benefits they received from doing yoga

1. Yoga helped me decrease my mental stress
2. Yoga helps in the systematic start of the day
3. Yoga helped me in waking up on time and follow a particular routine
4. I am able to focus and concentrate on my studies more. Yoga helped me calm my mind
5. Yoga improved flexibility in my body
6. Yoga relieved my back pain

function, and muscle strength. These benefits can help students to stay healthy and active, which can lead to improved academic performance.

CONCLUSION

Yoga is a valuable tool for 1st year medical students to improve their physical, mental, and emotional well-being. It can help them reduce stress and anxiety, improve flexibility and balance, enhance concentration and focus, and improve overall physical health. It should be continued in FC.

Limitation of the study

Our study is a small-scale cross-sectional study conducted in a single medical institute situated in Kolhan region of Jharkhand in India. Large scale studies are needed to generalize the findings to all medical students. We used a self-administered questionnaire that recorded the perceived benefits to students. We did not use any biological marker or scale to measure the benefits.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No conflicts of interest are reported by authors.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

All the authors have equally participated in the research study and formulation of manuscript. Final manuscript has been reviewed and approved by all the authors.

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