Therapeutic Effects of Yoga Nidra: A Review

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ABSTRACT

Yoga Nidra is a relaxation technique. The name “Yoga Nidra” derives from two Sanskrit words, “Yoga” which means union and “Nidra” which means sleep. Yoga Nidra is a state of consciousness, guided by meditation. The goal of Yoga Nidra is to move into a deep state of conscious awareness sleep. In modern aspect this works with autonomic nervous system. General objective of this study was to evaluate the clinical effects of Yoga Nidra. Specific objectives were to identify the therapeutic effects of Yoga Nidra for psychological diseases and to identify the therapeutic effects of Yoga Nidra for physical diseases. Literature searches were carried out using the words Yoga Nidra; typed into popular search engines, including Google and Google Scholar to find out the therapeutic effects of Yoga Nidra within the period of 06 months was the methodology. The study showed that Yoga Nidra is beneficial in reducing mental diseases such as stress, anxiety, insomnia and post-traumatic stress syndrome, psychosomatic disorders and physical diseases such as hormonal imbalance, pain in diseases, migraine and noncommunicable diseases; Diabetes mellitus, Hypertension and Cardiovascular diseases. Yoga Nidra has therapeutic effects, practice of it improves physical, mental and social well-being and it can be used as a preventive, promotive and curative technique were the conclusions of this study.

Keywords: Yoga Nidra, Depression, Anxiety, Noncommunicable diseases, well-being

INTRODUCTION

Yoga Nidra (YN), also known as yogic sleep/ psychic sleep, is a relaxation technique.¹ The name “Yoga Nidra” derives from two Sanskrit words. “Yoga” which means union and “Nidra” which means sleep. This Yoga Nidra is a state of consciousness, guided by meditation. But Yoga Nidra and meditation are two different practices. The goal of Yoga Nidra is to move into a deep state of conscious awareness sleep. In modern aspect this works with autonomic nervous system.

OBJECTIVES

General Objective:
To evaluate the clinical effects of Yoga Nidra.

Specific Objectives:
To identify the therapeutic effects of Yoga Nidra for psychological diseases.
To identify the therapeutic effects of Yoga Nidra for physical diseases.

Justification:
Benefits of practicing Yoga Nidra are improving memory power and reducing stress according to the common opinion by Yoga Acharyas at present. The therapeutic effects of Yoga Nidra must be identified by the physicians who are practicing yoga therapeutics.

Hypothesis:
H1: Yoga Nidra has therapeutic effects
H0: Yoga Nidra has no therapeutic effects

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Definition of Yoga Nidra**

According to Maharshi Markandey, Yoga Nidra is the state of deep sleep relaxation. The text Markandey Purna mentioned that at the end of Kalpa, Lord Vishnu was lying on the bed of serpent in the state of Yoga Nidra.²

According to Swami Satyananda Saraswati, YN is a state of mind between wakefulness and dream.³

**History of Yoga Nidra**

Yoga Nidra is a part of Yoga philosophy, originated in India. Yoga Nidra (YN) is mentioned in Sankhya philosophy. Upanishad and Maha Bahrata also mentioned about Yoga Nidra. Ancient time Mahabharata, in 3rd century, is mentioned a VII state called as yoga Nidra. There was a VIII goddess named as Yoganidra in Devimahatmya, written around 6th century.⁴

**Medieval time**

Yoga Nidra used in Hatha yoga and Raja yoga texts in 11th or 12th century. They used the word Yoga Nidra as a synonym for Samadhi, a deep state of meditative consciousness. In a Shaiva book Yoga Nidra is called “peace beyond words”.⁴

**Modern era**

Authors such as Annie Payson Call, Edmund Jacobson, Dennis Boyes, Satyananda Saraswati and Swami Rama contributed their efforts for introducing Yoga Nidra.⁵

**Method of doing Yoga Nidra**

There are 8 stages of Yoga Nidra.³

I. Relaxation- Primary preparation of the body.
II. Affirmation (Sankalpa)- A personal goal previously decided upon is declared silently.
III. Rotation of Consciousness
IV. Respiration awareness - A period of awareness of the breath
V. Manifestations of opposites - experience Pairs of feelings and emotions
VI. Creative visualization- various types of images are mentally visualized.
VII. Affirmation - repeat again
VIII. Return to full awareness- gradually return to the normal state

There are 5 states of yoga Nidra according to yoga Vedanta.⁶

The waking state- Jagrat Avastha
The dream state- Svapna Avastha
The deep sleep state- Sushupti Awastha
The supra conscious state- Turia Avastha
The state beyond states - Turiyaitita Avastha

Yoga Nidra should be done in a peaceful, lighted and well-ventilated place and practitioner should be wear a comfortable and loose cloths.

**MATERIALS & METHODS**

Literature searches were carried out using the words Yoga Nidra; typed into popular search engines, including Google and Google Scholar to find out the therapeutic effects of Yoga Nidra within the period of 06 months.
Analyzing abstracts and filtering irrelevant papers

Filtering based on Full-text reading

Reference scanning

Analysis of literature review

**DATA COLLECTION & RESULTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Findings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>02 Short communication effect of Yoga Nidra on blood glucose level in diabetic patients.⁵</td>
<td>S. Amata et al (2009)</td>
<td>Reduced blood glucose level begin after 01 month of YN.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05 iRest Yoga Nidra on the college campus: changes in stress, depression, worry and mindfulness.⁶</td>
<td>HE Muller et al (2013)</td>
<td>Reduce symptoms of perceived stress, worry and depression and increase mindfulness-based skills.</td>
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<td>06 Impact of Yoga Nidra on menstrual abnormalities in females of reproductive age.¹¹</td>
<td>M. Rani et al (2013)</td>
<td>Helpful in patients with hormone imbalances, such as dysmenorrhea, menorrhagia, metrorrhagia and hypomenorrhea.</td>
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<td>08 Transforming trauma: A qualitative feasibility study of integrative restoration (iRest) Yoga Nidra on combat-related post-traumatic stress disorder.¹³</td>
<td>L. Stankovic (2011)</td>
<td>Reduced rage, anxiety and emotional reactivity and increased feelings of relaxation, peace, self-awareness and self- efficacy.</td>
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<td>14 A study of the improvement of physical and mental health through Yoga Nidra.¹⁹</td>
<td>K. Kumar (2006)</td>
<td>The improvement of physical and mental health as a result of practicing YN.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Yoga Nidra as a stress management intervention strategy.²¹</td>
<td>M.K Dwivedi et al (2020)</td>
<td>YN has a great potential to decrease the stress level. Increases the parasympathetic system which results into physical, mental and emotional relaxation in our body.</td>
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According to the above 30 researches the following benefits of Yoga Nidra were found as results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Therapeutic effect of Yoga Nidra</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improve mental health</td>
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<td>Reduce Stress</td>
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<td>Reduce anxiety</td>
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<tr>
<td>reduce depression</td>
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<tr>
<td>Helpful in post-traumatic stress syndrome</td>
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<td>Relax nervous system</td>
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<td>Increase positive well-being</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase mindfulness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase sleep</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase self-esteem, self-awareness, self-care, self-confidence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improve physical health</td>
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<td>Reduce blood glucose level</td>
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<td>Helpful in menstrual disorders</td>
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<tr>
<td>Helpful in burnt patients</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reduce pain</td>
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<td>Reduce blood pressure</td>
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<td>Helpful in ischemic heart disease</td>
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<td>Helpful in migraine</td>
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**DISCUSSION**

Present days, many people suffering from stress and anxiety due to competitive life style. Noncommunicable Diseases are also a number one cause of death in the world and need long term treatments. The medicines are also expensive. Therefore, people need alternative method for increase their quality of life. The study shows that *Yoga Nidra* is beneficial in reduce mental diseases such as stress, anxiety, insomnia and post-traumatic stress syndrome, psychosomatic disorders and physical diseases such as hormonal imbalance, pain in diseases, migraine and noncommunicable diseases; Diabetes mellitus, Hypertension and Cardiovascular diseases.
CONCLUSION
Yoga Nidra is effective for the improvements in physical, mental and social well-being and it can be used as a preventive, promotive and curative technique.

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REFERENCES

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