

Impact of yoga on the behaviour of boys with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

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Introduction

ADHD is a common and complex behavioural disorder, prevalent in 3%-5% ¹of school age children. This disorder is characterised by hyperactivity and impulsivity and or inattentiveness. Extensive research has found neither cause nor cure; however evidence suggests a neurological basis ² with genetic and environmental factors contributing. A multi-modal approach to treatment including psychopharmacological and behavioural management is currently the most effective form of treatment. Evidence suggests that Yoga impacts on neurological functioning ³, in the areas of the brain which are similar to those impaired in ADHD. This study aimed to investigate the effect of yoga on the behaviour of boys with ADHD after a yoga intervention.

Methods

Boys with diagnosed ADHD and stabilised on medication participated in the study. A small randomised control trial (n=11 experimental) and (n=8 control) was conducted over a 20-week period. The experimental group attended a one hour yoga class once a week. They were not medicated during yoga sessions. The control group attended a social cooperative games group once a month. The attention and behaviour of boys were assessed using established psychological instruments pre and post test. Blinding to the nature of the intervention was not possible.

Results

Parents rated their boys when unmedicated. On the Conners' Parent Rating Scale (CPRS) significant group by time interactions were found on the subscales: Oppositional Behaviour (p=.047); Global Emotional Lability (p=.009); Global Index Total (.016). There was a trend favouring the yoga group on the Conners' Global Restless/ Impulsive (p=.160). There were no significant differences between the groups on attention, hyperactivity, anxiety, social problems, or cognitive problems. No significant improvement was found on the Conners' Teacher Rating Scale or the Test of Variables of Attention (TOVA). Teachers rated boys during school hours when they were medicated.

Discussion

Parents of boys in the yoga group reported significant improvements in a secondary and comorbid symptoms of ADHD, but not the primary symptoms, although a trend was found for Restless/Impulsive behaviour. The study was small and lacked power and a replication using larger samples, more intensive interventions and more sensitive measures may be needed to detect the potential benefits of yoga as an adjuvant treatment for boys with ADHD.

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Yoga as an adjuvant treatment for boys with ADHD may be useful in assisting them to self-manage their behaviour while unmedicated. Well-designed studies are needed to assess the potential benefits of this ancient practice on this modern disorder.