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A Systematic Review of the Effects of Yoga Therapy for Chronic Low Back Pain

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Opioid overdose rates have risen sharply over the last several years. While the cause of this steep incline is multifactorial, some behaviors have been identified as contributing to the opioid crisis. In August of 2014, King, Fraser, Boikos, Richardson, and Harper, published an article that sought to identify the determinants of increased opioid mortality in the United States (US) and Canada. Determinants were ultimately placed into three categories: prescriber behavior, user behavior and characteristics and environmental and systemic determinants (King et al., 2014, para. 2). The purpose of this paper and poster is to present the current state of the opioid crisis and to explore alternative therapies for treatment of chronic low back pain in the general adult population. An advanced literature search was conducted between the dates of February 2, 2017 and April 1, 2017 using the following databases: CINAHL with full text, Medline, PsycInfo, Social work Abstracts, Health source: nursing/Academic and PsycArticles. Eight quantitative studies that had a control were included for review. The included eight studies identified decreased pain and depression with yoga therapy as well as increased function and flexibility. A decrease in pain medication use was also noted in two of the eight studies. Yoga therapy was found to be beneficial and safe for patients with sciatica and disc bulges. Patient self-efficacy scores showed more improvement in the yoga arm of randomized controlled trials. Findings indicate that yoga therapy is an effective, cost efficient alternative to usual medical care and opioid prescribing for low back pain. There is a need for larger randomized control studies to include minorities and special populations such as different ethnic groups, pregnant women and populations with comorbidities. Outcomes data will guide future standards of care and evidence based medicine will aid in one aspect of the opioid crisis, prescriber behavior.

Title:

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Keywords:

Chronic low back pain, Opioid crisis and Yoga

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Abstract Summary:

The purpose of this poster is to present the current state of the opioid crisis and to explore alternative therapies for chronic low back pain in the general adult population. Findings indicate that yoga therapy is an effective, cost efficient alternative to usual medical care for low back pain.

Content Outline:**A systematic review of the effects of yoga therapy for chronic low back pain**

I. Factors that contribute to the opioid crisis and that may potentially alleviate the crisis are reviewed

A. Prescriber behavior, user behavior and characteristics and environmental and systemic determinants were identified as contributing factors

B. Yoga as an alternative therapies for treatment of chronic low back pain in the general adult population was evaluated as a possible alleviating factor

II. A total of 199 publications ranging from 1974 to 2017 were found. When limits of all adult, peer reviewed articles were added, the search yielded 44 articles. Of the remaining 44 articles, the following inclusion criteria was utilized to further narrow the field:

A. All trials (experimental and nonexperimental) with a control group

B. Adults with low back pain

C. Intervention of yoga therapy

D. Similar outcomes used to determine effectiveness

E. Review question clearly stated

F. Validity of studies assessed appropriately

G. Summary of findings included

H. Recommendations supported by the reported data.

III. Eight RCTs that were selected for review represented the following characteristics:

A. Adults ages 19-70

B. Special populations

C. Women

D. Minorities

E. Veterans

F. Disadvantages persons.

IV. The included eight studies identified decreased pain and depression with yoga therapy as well as increased function and flexibility.

A. A decrease in pain medication use was also noted in two of the eight studies.

B. One study demonstrated that yoga therapy was found to be beneficial and safe for patients with sciatica and disc bulges.

C. Two of the studies reported lasting benefits of yoga 6 months post-intervention.

V. Of the eight included studies, several limitations were noted

A. Balanced gender inclusion is needed

B. Diversity in the sample is needed

C. Larger sample sizes are needed

D. Long term follow up is needed

E. Studies using more objective measures such as MRI, x-rays are needed

F. Strategies to decrease loss to follow up are needed

VI. Prescriptive behaviors have been identified as having a causal effect on the opioid crisis.

A. Primary care providers should be responsible prescribers and consider complementary and alternative medicine such as yoga in the treatment of low back pain.

B. Findings indicate that yoga therapy is an effective, cost efficient alternative to usual medical care for low back pain

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Author Summary: Theresa Poling is a Family Nurse Practitioner and an Assistant Professor of Nursing

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