In the News: Mind/Body Research

by
Mary Yoke, M.A., M.M.
Indiana University Department of Kinesiology, School of Public Health
mmyoke@indiana.edu

I. Yoga
A. Study by Wang et al (2013) quantifies physical demands of yoga in seniors
C. Yoga has been found to reduce high BP; it has also been demonstrated to effectively reduce blood glucose levels, cholesterol levels, and body weight (Okonta, 2012). Regular yoga practice is associated with mindful eating and attenuated body weight. (Kristal et al, 2005)
D. For low-back pain, yoga is more effective than using a self-care book, but is no more effective than stretching (Sherman et al, 2011)
E. 2009 study by Williams et al found that Iyengar yoga decreased pain, disability, and depression in people with chronic low-back pain.
F. Meta-analysis found that yoga may be useful for several pain-associated disorders, including back pain, arthritis, and headaches/migraines (Büssing et al, 2012)
G. Iyengar yoga may improve fatigue in breast cancer survivors (Bower et al, 2012)
H. Significant and positive effects were found in patients with neurological and psychiatric disorders by practicing yoga (Meyer et al, 2012).
I. Review article on yoga found reduced incidence of pre-term labor, decreased low birth weight, decreased pregnancy discomfort and sleep disturbances, and increased quality of life in pregnant women (Babbar et al, 2012).

II. Meditation
A. Compassion meditation training increases compassion and decreases depression (Desbordes et al, 2012).
B. Mindfulness-based stress reduction meditation results in positive changes in the brain’s gray matter concentration in the left hippocampus—the part of the brain involved in learning, memory and emotional control (Hölzel et al, 2011).
C. Meditation improves the ability to sustain attention (MacLean et al, 2010).
D. Meditation increases telomerase activity; this has potential implications for a stronger immune system and increased longevity. Negativity indicators also decreased (Jacobs et al, 2011).
III. Pilates
A. Pilates improves abdominal endurance, upper-body muscle endurance, and hamstring flexibility (Kloubec, 2010).
C. Pilates improved balance and reduced the incidence of falls in women over 65 (Irez, G.B. et al, 2011).
D. Review of Pilates exercise finds benefits (Cruz-Ferreira et al, 2011).
E. Pilates claims not yet proven: 1) results in longer, leaner muscles, 2) improves posture, 3) prevents injury, 4) enhances functional fitness, 5) increases body awareness, 5) easy on the joints, 6) improves performance in sports, 7) improves coordination, and circulation, 8) helps with weight loss. Pilates training may or may not address these claims—however, no studies have yet shown them to be true (Weil, 2013).
F. Pilates, Tai chi, and Gyrokinesis classes increase student mindfulness (Caldwell et al, 2010).

IV. Tai Chi
A. Tai chi helps Parkinson’s patients with balance and fall prevention (Li, et al, 2012)
B. Review shows several beneficial health effects from the practice of Tai chi and Qi gong (Jahnke et al, 2010).
C. Tai chi is a valuable method by which to enhance or maintain a healthy state of psychological functioning (Zhang et al, 2012)

References:
- Desbordes G, Negi LT, Pace TW, Wallace BA, Raison, CL, Schwartz EL. Effects of mindful-attention and compassion meditation training on amygdala