Guest Editorial
Toward building evidence for yoga

Original Articles
Comparative immediate effect of different yoga asanas on heart rate and blood pressure in healthy young volunteers
Effect of trataka on cognitive functions in the elderly
Effect of Bhramari pranayama and OM chanting on pulmonary function in healthy individuals: A prospective randomized control trial
Effect of yogic colon cleansing (Laghu Sankhaprakshalana Kriya) on pain, spinal flexibility, disability and state anxiety in chronic low back pain

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This book is written by an accomplished physician and Yoga therapist and researcher, Dr. Ananda Balayogi. This work is a compilation and extended elaboration of all the research conducted by Dr. Ananda Balayogi and Dr. Madan Mohan, Head of Department of Physiology at JIPMER, Pondicherry. Unique highlight of the book which separates it from all other Yoga therapy books available in the market, is the depth of Yoga philosophy through which the authors were able to see the problem of disease and therefore, could come up with the most fundamental and comprehensive solution of Yoga. The depth can be understood in the preface itself, where the author ascribes the goal of life to be the state of “ultimate universal unification” and health as a mere positive side benefit of the above. The book has a very sound, clear and solid spiritual base and therefore, has succeeded in reaching the very depth of the problem of human diseases. Thus, authors could come up with a comprehensive solution of Yogic lifestyle for all major life-style related disorders. The core is given by Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri in chapter 8 where he says “there is only one disease, duality. Its cure is a return to universal oneness” (p. 88).

The book is a remarkable work, it covers almost all the major health related problems where Yoga has been and should be effective. The book not merely gives the list of practices but also provides necessary models, scientific basis on the mechanism of actions of various modalities of yogic treatments. Most importantly, the authors do not simply just give a prescription of physical postures or breathing techniques for a disease like “a pill for ill” but put their emphasis on bringing about a change in the attitude of the individual, which transforms him/her and thus, helps prevention and management of disease through changing outlook toward life. The author projects Yoga therapy as a holistic way of living that incorporates postures, breathing techniques, meditation, relaxation, diet and attitude and healing is understood as an inherent potential of human beings, which is invoked when movement, breathing and awareness are in perfect harmony with each other.

The book has eight sections and 31 chapters which include most problems of human body and mind that one sees in clinics around the world today. Thus, the book is a handy compendium of Yoga therapy and its applications to many disorders. The Yogic concept of diseases is well brought out and discussed along with statements from Tirukkural (ancient Tamil treatise), Yoga Vashista and Shivaswarodhaya. Knowing the source and cause of disease, it is then easy to provide a therapy appropriate to the condition; Yoga provides a broad base for such an approach. In Section II, the book takes up the important aspects of cardiovascular conditions, which are termed life-style disorders. Introduction of spanda – nispanda is important which is a tension-relaxation exercise for an effective relaxation of the musculoskeletal system. This is followed by the practice of pranayama and some “contemplative practices” such as prana dharana, mindfulness and ajapa japa. Section III deals with metabolic disorders including obesity and diabetes mellitus. Section IV deals with respiratory disorders, starting with a presentation on the nasal cycle. Traditional views on Swara Yoga is initially presented followed by chapters on specific pranayama and kriya techniques that are found useful for many breathing disorders. Section V is on musculoskeletal conditions including back pain, spondylosis and problems related to aging and mobility. The author emphasizes that Yoga asanas and pranayama could target both local and global problems related to musculoskeletal complications and therefore, are very important aspects of rehabilitation. Specific yogasanas, pranayama and kriyas are suggested and are of great help especially as one grows old. Section VI deals with psychiatric and psychological aspects; author proclaims that Yoga sutras of Patanjali are an ideal base for understanding, controlling and ultimately overcoming problems of the mind. Areas of interpersonal relationships,
stress, depression, geriatric psychiatric disorders are all introduced and holistic approach in each area is presented. Section VII deals with “special target groups” such as healthy and disabled children, pregnancy, patients with multiple sclerosis and senior citizens. All these groups need special attention to their specific problems. Author shows the possibility of tailoring Yoga modules for each section of the population where some need easy flowing asanas and some need pronounced activity.

The book is a boon for Yoga therapists and should be an essential part of their syllabus in any institute around the globe. The book is equally useful for any Yoga enthusiast, Yoga teacher or lay man because of its simple language and easy layout. However, the book has missed some important evidence based practices proved through researches in some premier research institutions in India. The author chiefly describes what he has found to be effective through researches and self-experience. The concepts mentioned in the book are important for researchers who seek to understand and clarify some fundamental pathways through which Yoga therapy may act. Many possible mechanisms are needed at various levels and this book contains some of the important ones that are required for further research.

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