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We are today faced with numerous debilitating chronic illnesses related to aging, environment, and unhealthy lifestyle, such as cancer, diabetes, osteoporosis, and cardiovascular diseases as well as many incurable diseases such as AIDS. Modern medical advancements provide the rationale for the integration of various traditional healing techniques including Yoga to promote healing, health, and longevity. It is imperative that advances in medicine include the wholistic approach of Yoga to face the current challenges in health care. The antiquity of Yoga must be united with the innovations of modern medicine to improve quality of life throughout the world. While modern medicine has a lot to offer humankind in its treatment and management of acute illness, accidents and communicable diseases.

No wonder that Dr. Dean Ornish, the eminent American doctor who has shown that Yogic lifestyle can reverse heart disease says, "Yoga is a system of perfect tools for achieving union as well as healing". According to Dr. B Ramamurthy, eminent neurosurgeon, Yoga re-orientes the functional hierarchy of the entire nervous system. He has noted that Yoga not only benefits the nervous system but also the cardiovascular, respiratory, digestive, endocrine systems in addition to bringing about general biochemistry changes in the Yoga practitioners.

Yoga has a lot to offer in terms of preventive, promotive and rehabilitative methods in addition to many management methods to tackle modern illnesses. While modern science looks outward for the cause of all ills, the Yogi searches the depth of his own self. This two way search can lead us to many answers for the troubles that plague modern man. Numerous studies have been done in the past few decades on psycho-physiological and biochemical changes occurring following practice of Yoga. A few clinical trials have also been done that have shown promise despite Yoga not being ideally suited for the scientific gold standard of 'double-blind' clinical trials.

Sri Balaji Vidyapeeth University has been in the forefront of this integration of modern medicine with Yoga and has established the Centre for Yoga Therapy, Education and Research (CYTER) in its MGMC & RI in Nov 2010. CYTER is now functioning in 1st floor, I block, adjacent to the main Hospital block, MGMCRI since December 2013. A scientifically sound Yoga therapy programme is offered through the Yoga Therapy OPD in from 9 am to 1.30 pm daily. Individualised and group Yoga therapy sessions are being conducted for various medical conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, as well as musculoskeletal and psychiatric disorders with excellent feedback from more than 3500 patients who have benefited till date. Numerous pilot studies have been completed and 4 major collaborative research studies are being undertaken under guidance of Dr. Madanmohan, Director CYTER and Professor and Head, Department of Physiology, at MGMC&RI. CYTER has in the past years published 8 papers and 6 abstracts in National and International journals while another 6 are in press.

A CME-cum-Workshop on "Yoga and Lifestyle Disorders" was organized by Department of Physiology and CYTER at MGMC&RI, Pondicherry on 22 November 2013. More than 250 medical and paramedical professionals and students as well as Yoga practitioners and enthusiasts from India and abroad took part in the one day CME that gave participants an overview of the role Yoga can play in lifestyle disorders by inculcating a healthy lifestyle. The CME-cum-workshop and Phase II of CYTER was inaugurated by Prof K.R. Sethuraman, Vice-Chancellor, Sri Balaji Vidyapeeth in the presence of Dr. S Krishnan, Dean (Administration) and Yogacharya S Sridharan and Dr. Latha Satish of the Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandriam, Chennai and Yogacharini Cathy Davis of the UK.

The following were the recommendations of the workshop:

1. The workshop puts on record its appreciation for the visionary efforts of the Chairman, management and authorities of Sri Balaji Vidyapeeth for their foresightedness in creating a Centre for Yoga Therapy, Education and Research (CYTER) at Mahatma Gandhi Medical College & Research Institute. This is truly innovative and is applauded by all concerned.

2. Scientific studies provide evidence of the preventive, rehabilitative and complementary role of Yoga in management of lifestyle disorders and hence it should be introduced in all medical institutions as part of an integrative approach for the benefit of patients.

3. It is desirable that modern medical professionals be exposed to the scientific and therapeutic aspects of Yoga and this may be done by awareness programmes, workshops and seminars.

4. Yoga should be introduced to undergraduate medical and paramedical students as recommended by MCI and this should be done in the first year itself.

5. A post graduate course in Yoga therapy may be introduced at the earliest for medical professionals to create resources for the delivery of yoga therapy as a health care modality.

We are happy to bring out the deliberations and the write ups submitted for the event as a special issue for the 'Annals of SBVU' for wider dissemination and readership. We hope that this will motivate more medical professionals to take up the practice of Yoga for their health and the health of their patients. It also may stimulate many to dwell into the psycho-somatic and somato-psychic mechanisms through which Yoga produces its beneficial physiological, biochemical and psychological effects.

Wishing you happy reading and a healthy life through Yoga.



“Yoga is probably the most effective way to deal with various psychosomatic disabilities along the same, time-honored, lines of treatment that contemporary medicine has just rediscovered and tested. Asanas are probably the best tool to disrupt any learned patterns of wrong muscular efforts. Pranayama and Pratyahara are extremely efficient techniques to divert the individual's attention from the objects of the outer environment, to increase every person's energy potentials and 'interiorize' them, to achieve control of one's inner functioning. Moreover, in restoring human unity, the Yoga discipline is always increasing awareness and understanding of ourselves, adjusting our emotions, expanding our intellect, and enabling us not only to function better in any given situation, but to perform as spiritual beings with universal values.”

- Dr Steven F Brena

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