Abstract No-3516: Yoga in Breast Cancer Survivorship: Knowledge, Attitudes, and Perceived Benefits

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Abstract

Aim: This study explored the knowledge, attitudes, and perceived effects of yoga among breast cancer survivors undergoing follow-up care.
Methods: A single-arm, survey-based retrospective study was conducted among 35 survivors aged 18–70 years who had completed surgery, radiotherapy, and systemic therapy and were practicing yoga as part of rehabilitation. A 20-point questionnaire assessed knowledge, attitudes, and perceived effects, with data collected from January to August 2024 and analyzed using standard statistical tools.
Results: Of the 35 participants, 91.4% were aware of yoga before therapy, and 85.7% recognized it as an accepted complementary modality. Most (57.1%) practiced yoga daily, and 62.9% practiced for 15–30 minutes per session. Thirty participants completed six months of yoga and were included in symptom assessment. Positive outcomes were reported by 94.3%, including improvements in physical and mental health, with over half noticing benefits by three months. Mild side effects (11.4%) included body aches and chest wall muscle cramps. Significant reductions were observed in chest wall pain, lymphedema, fatigue, appetite loss, mood disturbances, and sleep issues.
Conclusions: Yoga appears to be a beneficial complementary therapy for managing breast cancer–related symptoms and enhancing physical and psychological well-being. Despite limitations such as retrospective design and small sample size, the findings support yoga as a safe, non-invasive addition to survivorship care

Introduction

Breast cancer survivorship has increased substantially with early detection and improved management, but treatment-related toxicities have also risen. To address these late effects, many patients and healthcare professionals are turning to Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) [1], with usage among breast cancer patients reported as high as 75% [2,3]. A 2007 randomized clinical trial showed that women in a 12-week yoga program had better social well-being than controls, and a 2015 systematic review reported small to moderate functional improvement in non-cancer patients practicing yoga. However, evidence on the physical and psychological effects of yoga in breast cancer patients remains limited. This project aims to explore patients' knowledge, attitudes, and perceived benefits of yoga.



Figure 1. Yoga Practice session.



Figure 2. The Yoga team

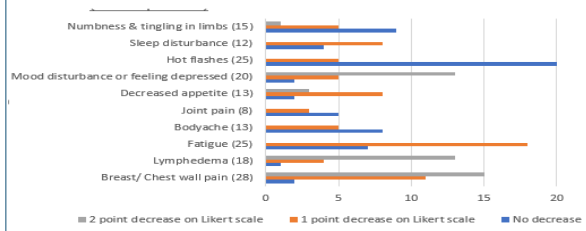


Figure 1. Proportion of Br. Ca patients reporting an improvement of points in Symptom Severity scale

Methods and Materials

A single-arm, survey-based retrospective study was conducted among breast cancer patients who had completed treatment and were on follow-up at Manipal Hospital, Kolkata. As part of a rehabilitation program, an NGO's yoga professionals provided periodic class, and a structured questionnaire assessed patients' knowledge, attitudes, and perceived effects of yoga. Inclusion criteria included women aged 18–70 years with any disease stage who had completed surgery, radiotherapy, and systemic therapy, were on routine follow-up, and were practicing yoga as taught by trained professionals; those on adjuvant hormone therapy/bisphosphonates were also eligible.

Results

Participants: 35 patients; 65.7% node-positive, 85.7% underwent axillary dissection, 83.9% MRM, & 91.4% chemo-RT.
Yoga Awareness: 91.4% knew yoga beforehand & 85.7% accepted it as complementary therapy.
Practice Pattern: 57.1% practiced daily; 20% >3 times/wk; 17.1% 1–3 times/wk; 62.9% practiced 15–30 minutes/day.
Engagement & Benefit :Only 2 showed inconsistent practice. Overall, 48.6% enjoyed, 80% reported physical and mental improvement, and 57.2% noted moderate benefit (20% substantial); 2 had complete symptom resolution.
Safety & Symptom Relief: Four mild adverse events occurred; two stopped due to symptoms. Among 30 long-term practitioners, ≥2-point improvement was seen in chest wall pain (53.5%), lymphedema (72.2%), mood disturbances (65%), with relief in frozen shoulder.

Discussion

Breast cancer survivors often experience persistent treatment-related symptoms—including pain, lymphedema, fatigue, neuropathy, mood disturbances, body aches, disturbed sleep, and hot flashes—highlighting the need for effective non-pharmacological supportive care. Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) approaches, such as yoga, meditation, music therapy, and acupuncture, are increasingly preferred by clinicians and survivors seeking safer, non-toxic symptom-relief options. Despite India being the global hub of yoga and breast cancer being the most common cancer among Indian women, very few studies have examined yoga's holistic impact on Indian breast cancer survivors. Our study showed strong awareness and positive attitudes toward yoga, with evidence of physical, psychological, and emotional benefits; prerecorded instructional videos were adequate for learning, and adverse effects were minimal (11.4%, all mild). Study limitations include its retrospective design, small sample size, single-centre setting, and potential response bias.

Conclusions

Our study substantiates evidence that yoga offers a safe/effective approach for breast cancer–related symptoms & should be considered a complementary treatment.

Symptoms	P value
Breast/ Chest wall pain (28)	<0.0001
Lymphedema (18)	<0.0001
Fatigue (25)	<0.0001
Bodyache (13)	0.0180
Joint pain (8)	0.0796
Decreased appetite (13)	<0.0001
Mood disturbance or feeling depressed (20)	<0.0001
Hot flashes (25)	0.0220
Sleep disturbance (12)	0.0007
Numbness & tingling in limbs (15)	0.0135

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