

WKS 01

Yoga for Relaxation & Health for People with Psychiatric Conditions

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Abstract

This workshop will be taught by an interprofessional team of two physical therapists and one licensed mental health professional. Both physical therapists are yoga teachers who have worked with a variety of patient populations and who have a Yoga Alliance Approved Yoga Teacher Training Program for Health Care Professionals. The mental health professional has implemented and researched programs that integrate mental health services with physical activity for people with severe mental illness. The workshop includes a brief description of yoga philosophy and a presentation of the scientific literature that 1) supports the safety and efficacy for the application of yogic principles in persons with mental illness and 2) demonstrates the psychological and health benefits of yoga for people with schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, depression, and anxiety disorder. Participants will learn and perform selected forms of pranayama (breath), meditation, and asanas (physical postures) derived from clinical trials that have included people with a range of mental health concerns and psychiatric diagnoses. All participants will be asked to wear comfortable, loose-fitting clothing and to bring a yoga mat or large towel.

Keywords: yoga, mental illness, breathing practices, meditation, asanas

Background: Yoga is an ancient practice that promotes “equanimity of the mind, perfection in action and severance from union with pain” (from the Mahabharata) and a state “where you are missing nothing” (Shri Brahmananda Sarasvati). Modern-day researchers are now demonstrating the positive effect yogic practices can have on the autonomic nervous system, gene expression, and areas of the brain (amygdala, insula, anterior cingulate cortex, medial prefrontal cortex) related to emotional regulation. Used as an intervention, yoga has been found to be generally safe and efficacious when applied in people with mental health and psychiatric conditions. During this workshop, participants will be taught different yogic practices that can be incorporated into a physical therapy plan of care to help patients and clients integrate their mind and body for self-care and health. Precautions for applying different yogic practices will also be discussed. Physical therapists can benefit from learning about specific breathing practices, meditations and physical postures that promote improvement in both physical and mental health.

Purpose: This workshop was developed to demonstrate the benefit of incorporating yogic practices into physical therapy to promote health and wellness in persons with mental health and psychiatric conditions. Objectives At the end of this workshop, participants will be able to:

1. Explain the scientific basis for breathing practices, meditation, and asanas (physical postures).
2. Explain the evidence for applying yoga in people with depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, and bipolar disorder.
3. Perform breathing practices, meditations, and asanas for schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and symptoms of depression and anxiety.

Methods: This workshop will begin with a lecture followed by an experiential lab. There will be a brief review of yoga philosophy and its relationship to rehabilitation followed by a presentation of the scientific literature that supports the physiological and psychological effects that yoga. After a review of the clinical trials in which yoga has been applied in people with mental health and psychiatric conditions, participants



will learn and practice the breathing techniques, meditations, and asanas (physical postures) included in those studies.

Instruments: This is a participatory workshop and will not include data collection.

Analysis: This is a participatory workshop and will not include data collection.

Results: At the end of this workshop, participants will be able to:

1. Explain the scientific basis for breathing practices, meditation, and asanas (physical postures).
2. Explain the evidence for applying yoga in people with depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, and bipolar disorder.
3. Perform breathing practices, meditations, and asanas for schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and symptoms of depression and anxiety.

Conclusions and Implication: This workshop supports the inclusion of yogic practices into physical therapy plans of care for people with mental health and psychiatric conditions. Physical therapists should develop skills in being able to provide a variety of yogic practices to best serve their patients' physical and emotional well-being.

Ethical approval: This workshop does not include human subject research conducted by the presenters.