Exploring Different Types of Hatha Yoga for Patients With Cancer

Sunita Subedi, RN, BSN

Yoga has been practiced for more than 5,000 years and is based on the collective experiences of yoga practitioners over time. Western countries and sophisticated medical facilities use this practice as a complementary therapy with standard medical treatments. Yoga has been shown to improve quality of life. Several types of yoga potentially can benefit people with cancer, including Hatha yoga. The type of recommended Hatha yoga is dependent on the physical conditions and fitness level of patients. This article explores the impact of different types of Hatha yoga on various cancer-related symptoms in patients with cancer. The article also provides guidelines for healthcare personnel—particularly nurses—to help choose the right kind of Hatha yoga that suits their patients’ needs and interests. Additional information is provided on measures and instructions that are essential for healthcare providers to know before recommending any yoga type to their patients. Evidence of the feasibility and potential efficacy of yoga for patients with cancer is provided.

Sunita Subedi, RN, BSN, is an oncology and adult gerontology nurse practitioner student in the College of Nursing at the University of South Florida in Tampa. The author takes full responsibility for the content of the article. The author did not receive honoraria for this work. The content of this article has been reviewed by independent peer reviewers to ensure that it is balanced, objective, and free from commercial bias. No financial relationships relevant to the content of this article have been disclosed by the author, planners, independent peer reviewers, or editorial staff. Subedi can be reached at ssubedi@health.usf.edu, with copy to editor at CJONEditor@ons.org. (Submitted December 2013. Revision submitted January 2014. Accepted for publication January 29, 2014.)

Key words: Hatha; yoga; cancer; symptoms

This article explains Hatha yoga and its impact on different types of cancer. Yoga is the sixth most commonly used complementary health practice among U.S. adults (NCCAM, 2013). Yoga also has gained popularity among patients who are diagnosed with cancer. Yoga may help in managing cancer-related symptoms and symptoms of many other chronic conditions, such as arthritis and pain (Cramer, Lange, Klose, Paul, & Dobos, 2012).

A variety of yoga types focus on different techniques (American Yoga Association, n.d.). Hatha yoga is practiced by concentrating on physical movements, postures, and breathing, whereas Raja yoga involves meditation and study by integrating exercise with breathing. Jnana yoga follows the path of knowledge and wisdom, and Bhakti yoga involves practice of devotion. Karma yoga focuses on doing good to other individuals with service (American Yoga Association, n.d.). This article explains Hatha yoga.

Hatha Yoga

Hatha yoga is popular in the United States and requires a combination of body postures and breathing techniques (NCCAM, 2013). Hatha yoga is considered to be a foundation of...