The effects of Yoga on blood pressure in patients with hypertension.

- a randomised controlled study of outpatients

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26/08/2010
Summary

Background and purpose

High blood pressure is one of the most common diseases in the western world and the healthcare costs of treating high blood pressure and associated illnesses are continuously rising. We know that stress affects blood pressure, and that this is a factor that is difficult to influence. Several studies have shown that yoga can help lower blood pressure and reduce levels of stress hormones in the body.

The aim of the study was to investigate the effects of yoga on blood pressure in patients in primary care who had been diagnosed with hypertension at least 12 months previously.

Method and materials

The study was structured as a randomised controlled study. Half of the 24 patients that applied to participate in the study were randomised into the intervention group (health talk plus 15 minutes of yoga twice daily), the other half to the control group (health talk plus 15 minutes rest twice daily). All the patients were given 24 hour blood pressure readings ahead of the health talk and after six weeks with/without intervention.

The findings

No significant lowering of blood pressure could be observed in either of the groups. The 24 hour average systolic blood pressure went down by 4.4 mmHg in the yoga group while this remained completely unchanged in the control/rest group (±0 mmHg). The difference between the groups in terms of lowering of blood pressure was not statistically significant either.

Conclusion

The study does not provide grounds to reach a conclusion on whether yoga can help lower blood pressure in primary care patients with hypertension. The study does, however, show a clear tendency towards a lowering of blood pressure in the yoga group (-4.4 mmHg), and it is interesting to note that resting twice a day does not appear to have any effect on blood pressure levels (±0 mmHg). More extensive studies are required to determine what role yoga can possibly have as a treatment option for outpatients patients diagnosed with hypertension. A comparative study of the effects of yoga on blood pressure on individuals practising yoga at home (using the model applied in the study) and in a group led by a yoga therapist respectively, would appear to be potentially significant.