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Yoga and drug abuse in athletes

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Abstract

Drug abuse is becoming common among athletes. There may be various reasons for which athletes are taking drugs. For this research paper many articles regarding therapeutic effects of yoga on drug abuse were studied thoroughly and results obtained showed that yoga is significantly effective in reducing withdrawal symptoms e.g. deaddiction of alcohol -AUDIT (Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test) and DUDIT (Drug Use Disorder Identification Test) showed significant improvement. Addiction of nicotine was also reduced to about 60% to 70%. Keeping in view the results of various studies it is concluded that yoga can be an effective therapy in treating drug abuse among athletes.

Keywords: Yoga and drug abuse various reasons for which athletes

Introduction

Yoga means union of body and mind. It is such a mind-body union which combines postures (asanas) with mindful awareness of self and pranic energy. Yoga healing system is based on four principles which are listed below:

1. Human body is comprised of various inseparable entities which are related to each other in one or the other way. If one entity is unhealthy then it will directly or indirectly influence the other one also. Hence, some kind of cure is required which will help in healing mind, body & soul at the same time.
2. Every individual is unique. So such a healing approach is needed which will accept the uniqueness of the person and will help in designing individualised practices.
3. Yoga plays an important role in healing by self-empowering. The practitioner is self-healer. Yoga guides him/her through the path to health.
4. Mind-set also plays a crucial role in healing as a person with positive thoughts is able to heal earlier than the one with negative thoughts. Therefore, yoga is the best option to control our mind.

According to Patanjali Yoga Sutras, eightfold path (Ashtang Yoga) should be followed to attain awareness and enlightenment. These eight limbs are Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahar, Dharna, Dhyana, Samadhi.

Out of these eight limbs, yama and niyama help you develop good habits which are morally & ethically correct and socially acceptable. Asana & pranayama are widely used to prevent & treat many diseases. These practices have huge impact on our respiratory & cardiovascular systems, help in rehabilitation, reducing stress, depression and helps in treating various addictions.

Most widely spread addiction is drug addiction. People regardless of their age, gender, background, race, job get addicted to drugs. But drug abuse is becoming common among athletes who want to enhance their athletic performance, deal with mental illness such as stress, cope with peer pressure or anxiety, even to aid in treating physical injury or relief from pain. There may be various other reasons for which athletes are taking drugs. Based on their needs, today the market is flooded with such drugs under various categories which are performance enhancing drugs (anabolic steroid, human growth hormone), painkillers and prescription drugs (oxycontin and vicodin), stimulants (amphetamines, methamphetamine), other drugs (alcohol, cocaine), etc.

Considering the various reasons of drug abuse, yoga may help better in making athletes aware of their body and controlling their senses and mind, so that they don't require any drug to get

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relief from pain.

The eight limbs once followed religiously will help athletes to recover from drug addiction. The first two limbs help them live a life to survive in society and they will act as a base for asana (physical exercises), pranyama (breathing exercises), pratyahara (control of senses), and dhyana (meditation- control of mind).

Materials and methods: In order to carry out this research study, many articles regarding therapeutic effects of yoga on drug abuse in athletes were studied thoroughly. The reasons behind drug abuse and how yoga helps in coming out of this, its affect on various systems of our body and mind, every related question is taken in account while studying those papers. For literature search, PubMed & Google Scholar were preferred.

Also the studies published in peer-reviewed journal till May of 2017, was viewed for inclusion in this review. The data collected was organized under different sections based on the disorder caused by using various drugs.

Results and discussions: A total of 250 articles and various other literature was studied to do a thorough research on the topic. Most of the studies were regarding the role of yoga in management of Nicotine-dependence. Some of them was based on the role of yoga in management of alcohol-addicts, opioid-addicts, cocaine-addicts, etc. Some studies were totally related to women drug addicts.

Effect of yoga on nicotine-addicts: A study conducted on 20 nicotine-addicts who had undergone yoga sessions (stretch & breathing exercises) on weekly basis were found that 65% of them were motivated to quit nicotine. Another study conducted on a 82 participants who were taught Sudarshana Kriya and breathing exercises in a 6-day workshop. 95% participants reported that during this session the cravings were reduced to minimum & 65% of them even quit tobacco. Many such studies were conducted on number of nicotine-addicts and results were almost positive in each of them. As nicotine helped them to reduce their anxiety level, this job is now replaced by yoga as it helps you improve your mood and reduce levels of anxiety. It also helped many of them in managing their stress.

Effect of yoga on alcohol-addicts: The study conducted on 38 post traumatic stress alcohol addicts who had undergone 12 yogic sessions, it was seen that there was significant reduction in the AUDIT (Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test) and DUDIT (Drug Use Disorder Identification Test) scores.

Effect of yoga on Cancer patients: Asanas, Pranayam & Meditation helped cancer patients in stress reduction, enhancing QoL (quality of life), promoting healing. It even reduced the risk of post-chemotherapy-induced nausea frequency, anticipatory vomiting, etc.

Effect of yoga on serotonin levels: Depression usually leads to decrease in the levels of serotonin but consistent practice of yoga helps in increasing serotonin levels, decreasing the monamine oxide levels. As it has no side effects, so many patients do yoga practice along with their medications also. Athletes may use this to come out if the trauma of previous failure or injury.

Effect of yoga on various systems: Yoga especially, pranayama create a balance between sympathetic & parasympathetic nervous system. It will increase the blood flow and regulates your breath and heart rate. Inverted poses are responsible for the flow of blood from lower body back to the heart, which in turn delivers back the oxygenated blood. Twisting and Bending poses also helps in massaging the internal organs, thus repairing any damage caused to those organs.

Conclusion: Yoga will affect each and every part of your body and helps refreshing your mind. All the stress, anxiety being the major cause of drug addiction can be healed easily by yoga.

Drugs may enhance your performance to certain level but they will always come with side effects. Instead of going for drugs, athletes better choose yoga which will help them enhance their performance in the long run.

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