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An investigation of functional movement impairments: A threefold study of yoga practitioners

Sean Buchner

Texas State University, USA

Study Design: Non-randomized controlled cohort/follow-up study.

Background: Movement Impairment Syndromes (MIS), described by Sahrman, involve faulty movement patterns including abnormalities in posture, muscle length, strength, which may result in mechanical breakdown over time. Sparse information exists on the movement proficiency of yoga practitioners, an effect of yoga teacher-training on movement performance, or efficacy of home exercise programs (HEP) designed to address underlying MIS.

Objectives: A threefold purpose: 1) investigate the extent that movement impairments were found in a group of asymptomatic yoga practitioners prior to eight-week yoga teacher-training course, 2) assess the extent that movement impairments identified during pre-teacher training assessment changed upon completion of eight-week yoga training course, 3) assess response to a six-week home exercise program designed to target impairments of participants.

Methods: 12 subjects were assessed using postural measurements, functional movements, muscular length and strength tests. Assessments of movement impairments were performed before and after yoga teacher-training and after a six-week HEP.

Results: MIS existed in all subjects prior to participation in the eight-week yoga training course. Upon completion of the yoga teacher-training course, reassessment revealed a significant increase in the number and severity of movement impairments. At the completion of six-week HEP, a significant decrease in the number and severity of movement impairments was found.

Conclusion: These findings suggest movement impairments may be found in regular yoga practitioners, movement impairments may increase following yoga teacher-training. The results support the use of targeted exercises to address MIS in a select group of asymptomatic yoga practitioners.

info@yogayoga.com