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Efficacy of yoga on neurocognitive correlates: A perspective for older adults

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Age-related neuro-cognitive disability, a global health crisis is on multifold rise. With important health implications such as Alzheimer's disease and related dementia it places tremendous burden on system of care. Evidences strongly remark that chronic stress, depression, anxiety, vascular and cardio-metabolic diseases exacerbate the severity of cognitive decay. Global organizations acknowledging non-pharmacological strategies, suggest cognitive behavioural training programs and physical exercise pivotal in maintaining and preserving neural-cognitive resources. Yoga, a mind-body intervention approach thrives to promote optimal physical and psychological wellbeing through four skill set tools – ethical percepts, postures, breath regulation and meditation techniques. The theoretical framework speculates that both bottom up physiological and top down cognitive processes interacting and influencing each other through myriads of pathways elicit relaxation response and improves integration and efficiency of high level and low level brain system. Body of preliminary investigations have documented positive changes with both acute and long term yoga practices in domains of cognition-attention, processing speed, memory, executive functions and mood. These salutary effects on multiple brain processes including behavior and emotional functioning have been reported profound compared to exercise. This indicates that yoga cultivating complex mix of emotional, attentional and behavioral wellbeing is a feasible intervention and can offset age related brain degeneration and facilitate cognitive resilience. However the research outcomes are still in infancy hence it is difficult to draw any firm conclusion. In order to establish the potential of yoga in gerontology, rigorous randomized controlled trials need to investigate neuroanatomical structures of brain using neuroimaging techniques.

Biography

Anupama Tyagi has completed her PhD from RMIT University and is continuing her Post-doctoral studies. She had published four research articles in reputed journals and one is under peer reviewing process. She is also serving as a peer reviewer in an international journal. With expertise in mind-body intervention her research interest area includes cognitive-behavioural therapies, quality of life, neuro-cognition, psycho-physiology, metabolic flexibility, physiological resilience, yoga, breathing techniques, meditation and relaxation techniques.

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