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Iyengar yoga and movement reeducation in the management of adult idiopathic scoliosis: A case report

Introduction: Adolescent idiopathic scoliosis is a lateral curvature of the spine measuring at least 10 degrees *via* Cobb angle measurement and with the presence of vertebral rotation. Intervention options include surveillance only, surveillance in addition to exercise, bracing and surgery. Generally, curve magnitudes exceeding 45-50 degrees fall into surgical range, an intervention where costs and benefits must be carefully weighed. Of emerging interest has been a greater push to improve management of adults with spine deformity, to include adults with AIS persistent into adulthood, as well as adults with onset of scoliosis in after skeletal maturity.

Objective: The objective of study is to describe the use of a modified Iyengar yoga practice in the management of a 57-year-old woman with idiopathic scoliosis. The patient had been diagnosed with idiopathic scoliosis and recommended for spinal fusion during her early adolescent years. The subject reported that the prognosis for not undergoing the surgery was the continuation and growth of the curvature, affecting breathing, equilibrium and gait as well as expectations of a limited functional life with episodes of acute pain and major health implications. She instead chose to work with conservative therapy, using the Milwaukee brace that did not work as she could not breathe and have a spatial orientation. She also was under specific physiotherapy sessions for scoliosis during a period of one year. She then opted to work with somatic movement reeducation techniques, Iyengar yoga and swimming.

Methods: The subject instead chose to work with conservative therapy sessions during a one year period. These approaches included somatic movement reeducation techniques, primarily Body Mind Centering, Feldenkrais, and Iyengar Yoga.

Results/Discussion: The subject has been studying and teaching worldwide. Iyengar yoga classes reinforced by her background on somatic movement based on motor development and biomechanics. The Iyengar yoga regimen has helped the patient to improve her posture, strength, stability, balance, proprioception, awareness of multidimensional breath, functional movement and over all well-being. The integration of concepts of movement reeducation based on bio mechanics and motor development has helped the improvement of sensory integration, awareness and motor coordination, and gait in addition the mild swimming to release the internal compression caused by the scoliosis and gravity. She is now 57 years old, pain free and living a functional and very active life.

Conclusion & Significance: The addition of Iyengar yoga therapy regimen with the integration of movement reeducation based on motor development for scoliosis as well as mild swimming can be very useful to promote wellbeing and healthy function for adults with severe idiopathic scoliosis, slowing down the processes of deterioration also caused by aging.

Biography

Marcia Monroe is certified as a Yoga Teacher by the Iyengar System of Yoga. She has also been certified by the somatic methods of Body Mind Centering and Feldenkrais. She has a degree in Dance and Movement Studies from the State University of New York and is registered as Somatic Movement Therapist (ISMETA). She teaches workshops internationally and is a Faculty Member of the Iyengar Institute of New York where she teaches Yoga for Scoliosis and Asymmetries. She is the author of numerous articles and is well-known for her book, Yoga and Scoliosis: A Journey to Health and Healing. She has also published the book, Engaging the Child through Yoga (2005).

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