

Yoga as a Tool for Public Health

Authors : Divya Kanchibhotla

Abstract : Of all the major health threats to emerge, none has challenged the very foundation of public health so profoundly as the rise of non-communicable diseases (NCD). Encouraging a holistic health approach encompasses the community's well-being. Competent public health grounded with holistic health approach can lay a better foundation in the modern world. Yoga has been increasingly explored as an adjunct therapy to major disorders. This study explores the efficacy of Yoga as a tool for public health. A survey was administered to 5500 adults, and 300 teens were selected from 25 states of India. The study explored the differences in health, happiness, and sustainable living between Yoga-practitioners and Non-yoga practitioners. The study also explored the practice and habits of yoga practitioners (frequency, place, reasons to practice) and Health, Happiness, and Sustainable Living. The subjects were grouped based on age, education, experience in yoga (years of practice), and occupational background. The study population comprised of 54% males and 46% females. Majority of the respondents (59%) were from 18 to 30 years age group. The study indicated that 96.4% of the total respondents have heard of Yoga. However, only 46.8% of the total study population practice yoga (YP) and the rest 53.2% were non-practitioners (NP). From a perspective of how Yoga and health, 72.7% yoga practitioners asserted a peaceful and happy life, 71.9% yoga practitioners felt satisfaction in life, and 70.2 % yoga practitioners had satisfactory health. 61.9% of yoga practitioners report being vegetarian, not eating junk food, and not drinking alcohol than 38.1% Non-Practitioners population. 47% of yoga practitioners found themselves to be more sensitive to the environment compared to only 40% of non-practitioners. India has been witnessing an unprecedented rise in the NCDs, accounting for 61% deaths. The importance of yoga as an adjunct therapy for various disorders and diseases is gaining momentum across the globe. There are various studies on yoga that have indicated benefits of yoga as a unique holistic approach towards lifestyle and a consistent, complementary solution that could be adopted for long-term viability for a well being. The comprehensive study is the first of its kind that takes a holistic look at the prevalence of Yoga for public health in India. Our study is unique and stands out as it is detailed in its outlook with extensive coverage of almost the whole country (surveying 25 out of 29 states) and contemplates on the benefits to an individual at the grass-root level - physical, mental and social outlook. The insights from the study will enable the health care systems and grassroots organizations to make the holistic practice of Yoga accessible to spread sustainable living for a healthy community.

Keywords : non-communicable disease (NCD), sustainable development goal (SDG 3), public health, healthy living

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