

A Self-Directed Home Yoga Program for Women with Breast Cancer during Chemotherapy

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Abstract : Background: Cancer-related cognitive impairment is a common problem seen in cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy. Physical activity may show beneficial effects on the cognitive function in such patients. Therefore, we have developed a self-directed home yoga program for cancer patients with cognitive symptoms during chemotherapy. This program involves a DVD presenting a combination of yoga courses based on patient preferences to be practiced at home. This study was performed to examine the feasibility of this program. In addition, we also examined changes in cognitive function and quality of life (QOL) in these patients participating in the program. Methods: This prospective feasibility study was conducted in a 500-bed general hospital in Tokyo, Japan. The study population consisted of breast cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy as the initial therapy. This feasibility study used a convenience sample with estimation of recruitment rate in a single facility with the availability of trained nurses and physicians to ensure safe yoga intervention. The aim of the intervention program was to improve cognitive function by means of both physical and mental activation via yoga, consisting of physical practice, breathing exercises, and meditation. Information on the yoga program was provided as a booklet, with an instructor-guided group yoga class during the orientation, and a self-directed home yoga program on DVD with yoga logs. Results: The recruitment rate was 44.7%, and the study population consisted of 18 women with a mean age of 43.9 years. This study showed high rates of retention, adherence, and acceptability of the yoga program. Improvements were only observed in the cognitive aspects of fatigue, and there were serious adverse events during the program. Conclusion: The self-directed home yoga program discussed here was both feasible and safe for breast cancer patients showing cognitive symptoms during chemotherapy. The patients also rated the program as useful, interesting, and satisfactory. Participation in the program was associated with improvements in cognitive fatigue but not cognitive function.

Keywords : yoga, cognition, breast cancer, chemotherapy, quality of life

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