Evidence-Based Application of Yoga for Improving Menopausal Symptoms

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Objectives: Menopause-related symptoms often result in considerable distress to women’s lives. Yoga is widely employed as a complementary method to manage menopause-related symptoms whereas its effects still need to be determined.

Methods: This systematic review and meta-analysis examined the effects of yoga on improving menopause-related symptoms. A systematic literature search with identified keywords was conducted “yoga”, “climacteric”, “menopause” in electronic databases including PubMed, MEDLINE, CINAHL, the Cochrane Library and the Airiti Library for relevant English and Chinese language studies published before Feb. 2018. Results of the literature search were screened by the proposed inclusion and exclusion criteria. Eleven articles were retained for meta-analysis after we removed some articles with irrelevant topics. Two reviewers independently assessed study quality was based on the Cochrane Risk of Bias Tool for Randomized Controlled Trials. Ranking of evidence was based on the Oxford 2011 Levels of Evidence. The meta-analysis was conducted by the Review Manager (RevMan) ver. 5.3.

Results: A total of eleven RCTs with 1294 participants were included. Meta-analysis results showed that practicing yoga resulted in an improvement in overall menopause-related symptoms [standardized mean difference (SMD) -0.96, 95% confidence interval (95%CI): -1.60, -0.32, p = 0.003; heterogeneity I²=86%], depression (SMD -0.23, 95% CI: -0.42, -0.03, p=0.02; I²=0%), sleep disorders (SMD -0.21, 95% CI: -0.41, -0.02, p=0.03; I² = 0%), and vasomotor symptoms (SMD -0.23, 95% CI: -0.41, -0.05, p=0.01; I² = 0%). However, practicing yoga could not result in a significant reduction in the perception of stress.

Conclusions: This systemic review and meta-analysis supports that yoga may improve overall menopause-related symptoms, depression, sleep disorders, and vasomotor symptoms. Base the result we designed the quasi-experimental tests the effectiveness of a 12-weeks training program of yoga for menopause symptoms. Recommendations related to practicing yoga for this specific population may be limited by influences associated with the internal and external validities of included studies. More rigorous studies need to be conducted to enrich the current available information.