

Yoga practice for the prevention of risk factors of cardiovascular disease

Sir,

An article published in Vol. 2 of IJCEP on the “effect of yoga training on blood pressure (BP) response during Surya namaskar (SN) following 11 months of yoga practice in army men and yoga-trained individuals” was found to be interesting, as the researchers has measured the BP response during the performance of SN in this study. Though many studies have reported the beneficial effect of short-term and long-term SN and yoga practice on cardiovascular parameters, in majority of this studies, the investigators have recorded the parameters before and after yoga intervention and not during the actual performance.^[1] It is the first study which has recorded sympathetic reactivity in long-term (11 months) practice of yoga in the army personnel and also compared it with the yoga- and semi-proficient individuals. They have observed that there was a significant reduction of BP response in army trainee compared to yoga practitioners.

In this article, the authors have reported that the army personnel could achieve the similar level of proficiency with those of yoga- and semi-proficient subjects within 3 months of yoga training. Further, in the present study, the army trainees were found to have attenuated pressor response during SN practice in comparison with yoga- and semi-proficient individuals, which indicates the better autonomic balance in these subjects. Army trainees, in addition to yoga practice also underwent training in structured physical activity as part of their routine schedule, which could be the reason for better autonomic balance. Augmented sympathetic reactivity has been associated with the development of hypertension and cardiovascular disease.^[2] Practice of yoga has been reported to yield sympathovagal homeostasis.^[3] Therefore, yoga training can be supplemented with physical activity in achieving better autonomic control in army trainees, which in turn reduce their risk of developing cardiovascular diseases.^[4,5]

In the present study, the sympathetic reactivity is assessed only by BP response during SN practice, the

other sympathetic function tests such as heart rate variability, cold pressor test, isometric hand grip test, and muscle sympathetic nerve activity were not done and the authors have mentioned that these are the limitations of the study apart from small sample size and only army men were recruited for the study. However, authors in the present study have not mentioned whether the study participants performed slow or fast SN. Bhavanani *et al.* had reported that practicing SN in different speeds provides different benefits on the body. The effects of fast SN are similar to physical aerobic exercises and improves the cardiorespiratory fitness, whereas the effects of slow SN are similar to those of yoga training, it strengthens and tones the musculature and enhances functioning of internal organs.^[6] Future studies focusing on both duration and practicing speed of SN will be more informative to scientific community.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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