

Example of meditation: a form of complementary medicine research paper

[Health & Medicine](#), [Stress](#)



Introduction

Complementary medicine is a group of therapies or diagnostic approaches that are outside the institutions of the conventional healthcare. There have been several names given to this group of therapies. These include alternative and integrative medicine. It can also be refer to as the group of therapies or treatment a patient use in addition to the doctor's standard care.

In recent times, there has been an issue with stress and this has been affecting the health status of people. In a bid to manage the stress, some of the approaches used involved the complementary medicine. These techniques help reduce the negative thoughts that could be associated with stress or promote different forms of relaxation techniques. These types of complementary medicine are now gaining popularity as a result of their effectiveness. By simple definition, meditation is a type of complementary medicine technique which is a complex process that is made up of changes in cognition, sensory perception, release of hormones and autonomic activities.

What is meditation?

Meditation is one of the complementary techniques that are usually practiced for several reasons to help reduce stress, increase calmness and physical relaxations. It has also been found to contribute to an improved psychological balance, help people cope with their disorder or illnesses and help to enhance their wellness (CDC, 2012). This is mostly important for those that are sick especially with chronic conditions. The important factor

found to be associated with the meditation is the four components that characterized the technique. These components are listed below; quiet location, specific comfortable posture, focus and open attitude. These components' presence is important to achieve the function of the meditation technique.

History

It was in the 6th century that meditation was first noted as a treatment technique. It was during this period that the first written description of meditation was noticed (Vandana et al, 2011). This description was actually related to Yoga which is a type of meditation that help people to sooth their mind. It was after this period of written description that the classical yoga text came in form of “ The Yoga Sutras”. In the 1893, the concept is now already taken to the west. This was as a form of The Transcendental meditation technique (Vandana et al, 2011). This type of meditation technique eventually gained popularity in 1960s. Research papers were now written during this period to actually describe the associated physiological benefits of meditation. This publication was eventually published in the 1970s. After this period of publication of the associated benefits that are linked with meditation, the practice was then expected to improve in all respect especially in physical and mental health perspective. Since that period, some papers have looked into the physiological effects as regards to the catecholamine factors and how it influences meditation.

Some of the factors that are usually considered when stress is being evaluated are the stress questionnaires, electromyography, Autonomic

Nervous System tests, and hormonal analyses. As a result of these factors that are usually used to evaluate stress, the autonomic stability was compared between meditators and nonmeditators. This was done in 1973 by using the simple galvanic skin response (Vandana et al, 2011). The result of the research during this period showed that meditators have a better response. Apart from the early research conducted on the effectiveness of the meditation technique in reducing stress, several other researches have been conducted especially on the different types of alternative medicine such as meditation, meditative prayer, and yoga and relaxation response in reducing stress-related symptoms. The findings have shown those techniques to be effective and since then in 1984, meditation has been recommended over certain forms of prescription drugs especially in the case of mild hypertension management.

In recent times, the type of meditation tagged ' Transcendental meditation has been found to contribute to the reduction of blood pressure in hypertensive patients. It was also found to contribute to some form of improvement in other associated risk factors such as dyslipidemia and insulin resistance. The benefit of this improvement was that which relates to the reduction in cardiovascular health issues.

Types of meditation

Meditation is a complementary medicine term used to describe several ways in which a state of relaxation can be achieved. There are several techniques that have those components listed above as a meditation important component. All these techniques categorized as types of meditation all share

the same goal of helping the individual in need achieve the inner peace.

Those ways that helps to achieve meditation include: Guided, Mantra, mindfulness, Qi gong, Transcendental, Integrated Amrita Meditation Technique and Yoga.

Guided meditation: This technique of meditation is sometimes called guided imagery or visualization. This type of meditation allows you as user to form mental images of places or situations you find relaxing. With this guided technique, you can achieve a relax state by using as many senses as possible. Senses such as smells, sights, sounds and textures can be used effectively to achieve the goal of relaxation. This type of meditation is usually led through this process by a guide or teacher.

Mantra meditation: This is another type of meditation that is done by silently repeating a calming word. Thought or phrases that are calming in nature can also be used so as to prevent any form of distraction relating to thoughts.

Mindfulness meditation: The special feature of this type of meditation is the fact that it is based on being mindful of what you are doing. Like you are fully concentrated on what you are doing. This could also be like you had an increased awareness and acceptance of living in the present moment.

Integrated Amrita Meditation Technique: is a simple combination of yoga, pranayama and meditation.

Qi gong: This from the name sounds more Asian in origin. The practice of this type of meditation relates more by combining meditation, relaxation, physical movement and breathing exercises. The results of the combination are to restore and maintain balance.

Transcendental meditation: In this type of meditation, mantra, such as a

word, sound or phrases are repeatedly silently. This is to help narrow someone's conscious awareness. It will also help eliminate all thoughts from the person's mind.

Yoga: This is the type of meditation has been in use since sixth century. It involves series of postures and controlled breathing exercises. Those postures and exercise are place to promote a more flexible body and a calm mind.

Chosen modality for a condition

Research has helped in uncovering the effectiveness of meditation on increased stress situations. The use of Integrated Amrita Meditation Technique which is a simple combination of yoga, pranayama and meditation reveal the reduction of two major stress hormones that are known to be increased immediately whenever there is stressful situations (Vandana et al, 2011).

How meditation works in the body

Meditation has been found to create some body changes in people that indulge in the technique. It is not meant for every situation. It is important for the users to understand how it works and how it affects the body for them to be able to identify the condition in which such can help. In most situations, meditations usually affect the nervous system. This is either the sympathetic nervous system or the parasympathetic nervous system (NCCAM, 2006). The two systems are subdivision of the autonomic (involuntary) nervous system. Body functions such as the heartbeat; sweating, breathing and digestion are all dependent on the autonomic

nervous system. As we understand the component of the autonomic nervous system, the sympathetic subdivision is that part that creates sympathetic situations or response that lead to increased heart rate and breathing rate. The parasympathetic is that which reduce the heart rate and breathing rate. It also contributes to increase in the flow of the digestive enzymes. This meditation technique will function by helping to reduce the activity of the body i. e. the sympathetic nervous system and increasing the parasympathetic nervous system.

Pros and Cons of use

Several people and experts still believe that the associated merits of the meditation still outweigh that of the demerits. Complications noted are very rare but there are some rare occasions where some of the people that engaged in the meditation later became disoriented or anxious. These people later experience some form of negative feelings afterwards. The benefit of the meditation technique is the fact that it has been confirm to be safe for people that are healthy.

There is yet any report that listed meditation as dangerous for such group of people. The demerits in the use of the technique is that there has been rare reports stating that meditation can lead occurrence or worsening of certain symptoms in patients that are noted to have psychiatric conditions initially. However, this report is yet to be fully confirmed by researches. Another demerit of the technique considering the listed components is that people with physical limitations are not likely to be able to participate in such type of meditative activities especially those that are involved in physical

movement. It is important that patient with cancer and chronic conditions need to talk to the teacher or guide before commencing such treatment. It is also not good for the patient to rely on this treatment alone or delay the engagement of conventional medical management especially for cancer treatment. This is simply because cancer may have serious health consequences if not taken care of properly.

Concluding remarks

The present understanding of effect of stress on increasing cortisol levels also buffer the use of relaxation or meditation techniques to manage stress issues or reduce the cortisol level. Although it might take some time (about 8 month) before the full trend of decrease in cortisol levels will be noted. This result may somewhat appears slow but it is always long lasting and beneficial for the affected patient. This significant fall in the adrenaline and downward cortisol trend shows the long term efficiency of the technique.

References

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