

Yoga camp in Ayurvedgrams of Chhattisgarh

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ABSTRACT

The clinical and empirical health benefits of yoga and *pranayam* have been reiterated through research. Yoga is being adopted as a system to alleviate the burden of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) across the globe. The Directorate of AYUSH, Government of Chhattisgarh (DoA, GoCG) conducts annual 5-day-yoga camp across 146 *Ayurvedgrams* in the State. The present article brings out the AYUSH initiatives the State is taking toward active ageing. A total of 71,096 people participated in the 5-day-yoga camp across the State. A mean participation of 5079 people over 5 days was reported across districts. Such statewide practices need to be promoted and appraised.

Key words: *Ayurvedgram*, Chhattisgarh, AYUSH policy

INTRODUCTION

Five-day yoga camp

Chhattisgarh has been a forerunner in taking program initiatives in AYUSH. A yoga camp was initiated across 146 *Ayurvedgrams* for 5 days (8th-12th February, 2011). It was taken up as a crucial initiate toward rejuvenating the indigenous manners of healthy lifestyle. The program objectives were as follows: (1) To organize 5-day-yoga camp across 146 *Ayurvedgrams* in Chhattisgarh. (2) To sensitize people toward physically active life through yoga. (3) To ensure active participation from the community.

Ayurvedgram

Ayurveda advocates preventive and health lifestyle practices in *swasthvrutta*. *Ayurvedgram* is a model village where *Ayurveda*-based lifestyles are promoted through behavioral change communication, training of village health workers

toward identification and use of local medicinal herbs. It also includes developing herbal kitchen gardens and herbariums in the village. The elected village representatives are also sensitized toward the concept so that there is also active participation from the community. There is also focus on promoting income generation programs and economic activities for the village self help groups based on AYUSH herbal remedies.^[1] To imbibe this concept into a programmatic phase, the Directorate of AYUSH, Government of Chhattisgarh (DoA, GoCG) initiated the model of *Ayurvedgram*. One from each block of Chhattisgarh, 146 *Ayurvedgrams* were selected.

Various *Pranayamas* and *Yogasanas* were taught at the 5-day yoga camp. The *pranayamas* taught were *Bhastrika*, *Anuloma-Viloma*, *Kapalbhati*, *Bhramri*, *Sitlee*, *Sitkari*, *Ujjayi*, *Vedhene Bandh*. The *yogasanas* taught were *Shavasana*, *Padmasana*, *Uthita padmasana*, *Dhanurasana*, *Vajrasana*, *Suryanamskara*, *Tadasana*, *Vrikshasana*, *Bhujangasana*, *Chakrasana*, *Shalabasana*, *Shirsasana*, and *Swastikasan*.

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MATERIALS AND METHODS

The DoA, GoCG identified 146 AYUSH dispensaries and Patanjali Yogpeeth as an organization competent to conduct yoga camps for this programme. The DoA, GoCG also made necessary administrative planning and signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Patanjali Yogpeeth. Two remote districts were falling short of yoga trainers. It was mutually decided that the camps in those districts would be conducted after the camps in all other districts and dates were finalized. *Ayurvedic* medical officers (AMOs) selected young adolescents doing well

in yoga as volunteers, sensitized the community regarding the camps, made necessary arrangements including social grounds at local level. The five-day camps were conducted early in the morning. AMOs promoted volunteers to continue yoga as a routine activity.

Outcome

In the 5-day-yoga camp 71,096 people participated across the State. A mean participation of 5079 people over 5 days was reported across districts.

Evidence and experiences

Yoga is an ancient Indian regimen, which provides a psychological, physical, and spiritual exercise to an individual. It has been studied for several decades for its role in the management of several chronic diseases including hypertension, asthma, obesity, neuromuscular diseases, and psychiatric illnesses (Aljasir, 2010). The scientific outcomes of such yoga camps are difficult to measure at a state level yet such initiatives in rejuvenating AYUSH systems and behavioral lifestyle change cannot be undermined. A 40-day-yoga camp reported a significant reduction in BMI and anxiety.^[2] The *Ayurvedgrams* have been directed to select volunteers for the village who shall carry forward the yoga activities. Studies have reported that *pranayam* helps in cardioacceleration.^[3] Sympathetic reactivity is also known to be reduced after 7-day yoga training and is advocated for bronchial asthma patients.^[4,5] A 3-month study in *pranayam* training modules has shown that there is increased parasympathetic activity and decreased sympathetic activity. It has also been noted that practice of *pranayam* modulates cardiac autonomic status and improves cardio-respiratory functions.^[6] Another 6-weeks course in *pranayam* studied ventilatory lung functions before and after the practice. They had improved ventilatory functions in the form of lowered respiratory rate (RR), and increases in the forced vital capacity (FVC), and prolongation of breath holding time.^[7] Innes and Vincent (2006) documented that yoga-based programs suggest beneficial changes in several risk indices, including glucose tolerance and insulin sensitivity, lipid profiles, anthropometric characteristics, blood pressure, oxidative stress, coagulation profiles, sympathetic activation, and pulmonary function, as well as improvement in specific clinical outcomes.^[8] WHO document that participation in regular physical activity reduces the risk of coronary heart disease and stroke, diabetes, hypertension, colon cancer, breast cancer, and depression. Additionally, physical activity is a key determinant of energy expenditure, and thus is

fundamental to energy balance and weight control. The dual burden of disease in India, that is the burgeoning noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) and the prevailing communicable diseases are posing a significant challenge to the constrained health resources. Cost-effective practices like yoga and *pranayam* promoted at mass level should be viewed as a mechanism in primordial prevention of NCDs.

CONCLUSION

An initiative like an annual 5-day-yoga camp is a giant leap in trying to inculcate healthy ageing practices by the State among the people. Yoga may be an effective mode of reducing disease burden and DALYs (disability adjusted life years) of NCDs. Government initiatives in adapting healthy traditional lifestyles assure political will toward a healthy State. Long-term impact of such camps needs to be appraised through scientific studies.

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