

YOGA FOR PARKINSON'S DISEASE

A COMPETENCY-BASED COURSE FOR YOGA TEACHERS

Renee LeVerrier¹, Beth Gold-Bernstein², Cathi A. Thomas³, Tami Rork DeAngelis³, Lorraine Jacobsohn²

¹ ILM Yoga, Newburyport, MA, ² TriYoga, Waltham, MA, ³ Department of Neurology, Boston University Medical Campus, Boston, MA; Center for Neurorehabilitation, Boston University, Boston, MA



BACKGROUND

Studies show that people with Parkinson's disease (PD) benefit from exercise to improve strength, flexibility, balance, overall fitness and quality of life.¹ Yoga, which includes deliberate movements, meditation and focused breathing, has been shown to be a complementary alternative to managing health and maintaining fitness. Emerging evidence on the benefits of specific yoga approaches designed for people with Parkinson's disease show that yoga may improve motor function, balance, flexibility, strength and quality of life in people with PD.² Based on their experience working with people with PD and the increased interest and availability of yoga in the United States, yoga teachers who gain an understanding of PD could lead safer and more effective classes for those students in their classes with PD.



OBJECTIVE

Describe a Competency-based Teacher Training Specific to PD Development History

- ☞ Yoga Teacher trainings piloted in 2010, 2011 and 2012 were one- or two-day courses.
- ☞ Course evaluations consistently demonstrated
 - High levels of satisfaction with material presented.
 - Lack of confidence in application of new material, uncomfortable with readiness to lead a class of people with PD.
- ☞ Gaps in curriculum identified and faculty was expanded for 2013 course.

Aims for 2013 Course

- ☞ Create a collaborative, interdisciplinary model in which a team of instructors (yoga teachers, a physical therapist, nurse specialists, all with expertise in PD) provide educational training to yoga teachers about symptoms and needs of people with PD.
- ☞ Provide training to certified yoga teachers to increase their knowledge about PD and their ability to safely, appropriately and effectively lead yoga classes for this population.
- ☞ Expand material to include various yoga approaches, modifications, application for physical as well as emotional benefit, additional hands-on opportunities.
- ☞ Present material over five days with a final day of practicum to promote both comfort and competency in application of curriculum into teaching practice.
- ☞ Upon completion of course, trained yoga teachers would identify high level of confidence in meeting specific needs of people with PD in their yoga classes as seen in practicum performance and written examination.



CORE CURRICULUM

The five-day course includes a combination of lectures, interactive sessions, discussion, homework readings, panel presentation and demonstration. Learning objectives included:

- ☞ Background: Understand PD epidemiology, symptoms, medical management, medications and role of the medical team.

- ☞ Safety and Benefit: Target areas for stretching, strengthening and balance as well as strategies for managing rigidity, freezing, tremor and minimizing fall risk.
- ☞ Yoga & Health: Apply yoga philosophy and research on benefits of practicing poses as well as the breathing, meditative, mind-body aspects of yoga
- ☞ Translation: Match physical therapy goals with poses and that match needs and when to modify.
- ☞ Non-motor Applications: Gain information on research support for how yoga helps anxiety and depression.
- ☞ Class creation: Design standing and mat pose sequence, cues and modifications for warm ups and seated postures including relaxation

OUTCOMES

- ☞ Four pilot workshops and one full five-day certification training (2013) have been conducted; sixty-two yoga teachers have been trained from around the U.S.
- ☞ Five yoga teachers who participated in the full five-day certification training have since implemented yoga classes for people with PD.

FUTURE

- ☞ Schedule additional competency-based five-day yoga teacher trainings with curricular expansion/modification based on participant feedback from surveys (next training is scheduled for April 2014).
- ☞ Conduct follow-up sessions with trained participants to share best practices and update on current evidence regarding medical management.
- ☞ Coordinate workshops in which teachers are trained to conduct the teacher training in their regions of the country.

CONDUCTING STUDIES

- ☞ Test the effect of yoga on strength, flexibility, balance, posture, gait and overall well-being of people with PD.
- ☞ Observe if yoga teachers successfully apply concepts such as modifications and safety measures from the training course when teaching students with PD.
- ☞ Determine the optimal level of teacher training needed.



References
 1 Goodwin VA, Richards SH, Taylor RS, Taylor AH, Campbell JL. The effectiveness of exercise interventions for people with Parkinson's disease: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Mov Disord* 2008;23(5):631-640
 2 Cosgrove Y et al. Effect of Yoga on Motor Function in People with Parkinson's Disease: A Randomized, Controlled Pilot Study. *J Yoga and Physical Therapy* 2012; 2:2
 3 Mahto RH, Barreto M, Lalakia J, Santhala C. The influence of Iyengar yoga on the quality of life of patients with Parkinson's disease. *Scientific Evidence of the Therapeutic Effect of Yoga: A Compilation of Research Papers*. Iyengar.org. Accessed September

Additional Resources
 Folsom L. *Iyengar Yoga Gets Better with Age*. PA: Rodale Press;2003
 Iyengar BKS. *YOGA: The Path to Holistic Health*, revised edition. London: Dorling Kindersley Limited;2008
 Krieger G. *Yoga for Walkers: Healing with the Himalaya Teachings of Maharaja*. NY: Penguin Compass;1999
 Le Verrier R. *Yoga for Movement Disorders: Regaining Strength, Balance and Flexibility for Parkinson's Disease and Dystonia*, Revised Edition. ILM Yoga, 2012
 Parkinson's Disease & Movement Disorder Society of India Iyengar Yogashrotra, Light on Yoga Research Trust: Yoga & Parkinson's Disease, www.parkinsonsocietyindia.com/Yoga_Parkinson_Disease.aspx
 Zaiger, P. Why yoga can be helpful to those living with Parkinson's disorder. *Wallphala*; 2008 December