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Yoga and Oral Health

(World Yoga Day Special Comment)

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It is my honour to write this guest comment for IHRJ. I wish the editorial team great success in their future endeavours.

WHO defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”¹ Oral health plays a major role in the general welfare of the patient. Oral health is an overall condition in which a person is free from diseases such as Dental caries, gingivitis, periodontitis, Oral cancer.²

Yoga or ‘Yuj’ is defined as union of the body, soul and mind. Yoga, in different forms or ‘asanas’ benefits the individuals in promoting their good health. It provides both physical and mental transformation in a person by enhancing muscular strength and body flexibility, reducing stress, anxiety and depression, improving respiratory and cardiovascular functions, relieving chronic pain. This has a positive effect on the quality of life. Stress reduction is one of the most important advantages of yoga.³

It has been postulated that physical or emotional stress activates various endocrine and immune pathways. Immunomodulators and inflammatory cytokines are released in the whole process which can lead to inflammation.⁴ Various studies have shown the role of psychological stress on the oral cavity. Oral psychosomatic disorders such as pain related diseases, diseases with altered oral sensation, namely, Burning Mouth Syndrome, Recurrent aphthous stomatitis, Glossodynia, Bruxism etc. have been noted to occur in patients with emotional stress.⁵

In patients with stress, there is an increase in inflammatory cytokines and proteins which mediate the process of inflammation in the body.⁴ As yoga provides full body relaxation and calming effects on the mind and body, it may reduce the inflammatory response and enhance the immunity.² It has been postulated that yoga induces an increase in the level of antioxidants such as Catalase, Superoxide Dismutase (SOD)

and Glutathione (GSH) in the body.⁶ Various studies have shown the protective effects of yoga by releasing antioxidants and reducing oxidative stress in patients with renal disease,⁷ Diabetes Mellitus.⁸ Oxidative stress also has a role in oral cavity by release of ROS (reactive oxygen species) in mediating various diseases including dental caries, gingivitis, periodontitis. Hence, yoga may improve oral health by decreasing inflammation in the oral cavity.

Yoga may also prove beneficial for the patients with stress induced oral diseases. A stress free body harbours a stress free mind which serves the entire purpose of yoga. A consistent yoga practice not only helps a person achieve good general health but also to achieve good oral health.

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