

Editorial

Kelly McGonigal, PhD

IJYT Editor-in-Chief

At the 2007 Symposium on Yoga Therapy and Research opening session, an IAYT member issued a challenge to the speakers on the “What is Yoga Therapy?” panel: Would they commit to beginning a serious conversation on the issues of defining Yoga therapy, creating training standards for Yoga therapists, and deciding whether and how Yoga therapy should be regulated as a profession? This issue marks the beginning of a public conversation. The *Perspectives* section includes opinion pieces by several members of IAYT and IAYT’s Advisory Council, including the founders of three Yoga therapist training programs. To shed some more light on the possibilities and pitfalls of professional regulation, the journal invited an article by legal expert Michael Cohen (“The Search for Regulatory Recognition of Yoga Therapy: Legal and Policy Issues”). This issue also includes interviews on these topics with IAYT’s new president, Janice Gates, and the president of the National Ayurvedic Medical Association (NAMA), Wynn Werner.

I believe this issue, with its honest dialogue about the future of Yoga therapy as a profession in the West, will stand out as a historic document. At some future time, when key questions about the profession have been settled, we will look back at this time period and see—what? The wild, wild (unregulated) West? Or a utopia that was destroyed by standards and regulation? Will it be the enthusiasm or the squeamishness about licensing that seems, in retrospect, misplaced? Will it be the eagerness or reluctance to join the healthcare system that seems naïve—or wise in its prescience? What questions will future Yoga therapists wish we had asked in these pages? Having not yet developed the *siddhi* power of seeing into the future, I won’t make any predictions.

As for my role, the central question I’ve been concerning myself with this year is: Who is this journal for, and what is its function? This is an important question to consider as the number and variety of submissions to the journal increases and our audience broadens.

I’ve already mentioned the importance of this journal as providing a public forum for, and historical record of, the evolution of our field. The journal is also becoming a place to reflect more deeply on the development of Yoga in the West. This year, we received a number of submissions from scholars who analyze the history, philosophy, and current trends in the field. This is an interesting direction for the journal, and I believe it represents a much-needed willingness to observe and question the process of how Yoga is practiced and taught in the West. In this issue, Chase Bossart reminds us that we cannot separate Yoga practices from Yoga’s origins (“Yoga Bodies, Yoga Minds: How Indian Anatomies Form the Foundation of Yoga for Healing”). Laura Douglass explores the tension between, and merging of, the Yoga tradition and America’s traditions over the last two centuries (“How Did We Get Here? A History of Yoga in America, 1800 – 1970”). Traci Michelle Childress asks us to consider how culture influences—and limits—how Yoga is perceived in the West, and who has access to the practices and knowledge of Yoga (“Power in Hatha Yoga Communities and Classes: Understanding Exclusion and Creating Space for Diverse Cultures”).

Another central aim of the journal has been to publish evidence that Yoga “works.” When Yoga was considered less mainstream, there were few publishing options for research on Yoga. But given the fact that high-impact medical and psychology journals now eagerly publish research on Yoga and meditation, it is not clear that our professional journal for the Yoga community is the best place to publish all research. However, one of the benefits of publishing for our specific community is that we don’t need to “edit out” ideas and details that might not find a home in the pages of journals aimed at a more general healthcare audience. Amy Wheeler and Linda Wilkin’s research report (“A Study of the Impact of Yoga *Āsana* on Perceived Stress, Heart Rate, and Breathing Rate”) is an excellent example of a study that hon-

ors Yoga practices commonly deleted from mainstream studies. Nicole DeAvilla's report ("Case Studies of Yoga Therapy with Focused Downward Release and Scapular Stabilization in Shoulder Injuries") provides a wonderful level of detail, and demonstrates what a holistic approach to physical rehabilitation can look like.

More importantly, this journal is a place where authors do *not* need to prove the value of Yoga to a skeptical audience. Instead, the journal is a place where Yoga professionals can openly and critically explore the hows and the whys of Yoga practices. This issue introduces a new section of the journal, *Yoga Therapy in Practice*, that contains clinical perspectives on providing Yoga therapy, with sample practices and general guidelines. This issue includes reports on Yoga for asthma (by Deborah Morse), repetitive strain injury (by Deborah Quilter), and schizophrenia (by Elizabeth Visceglia). In addition, Vijai P. Sharma addresses

recent medical journal reports about injuries caused by Yoga breathing practices, and offers guidelines for safely teaching or beginning a *prāṇāyāma* practice.

I hope that in this issue, you find at least one article that can inform your work, one article that makes you think about your personal Yoga practice in a new way, and one article that you can't wait to share with a student, colleague, friend, or family member. My gratitude to the peer reviewers who provided feedback on this year's submissions and, in some cases, helped authors substantially rethink and revise their papers. If you are interested in submitting an article for next year's journal, you can find guidelines in the back of this issue ("Instructions for Contributors"). Ultimately, it is what you contribute that shapes the journal.

Direct correspondence to Kelly McGonigal at editor@iayt.org.