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Editorial

Yoga Therapy: The Synchrony of Art and Science

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Editor in Chief



The field of yoga therapy is growing at a phenomenal rate. An estimated 1,000 yoga therapy studies have been published since 2000. This represents a nearly fivefold increase since the previous decade. The benefits of yoga as therapy are no secret to the millions of yoga practitioners in the East who have embraced its rich traditions for thousands of years, yet in the West

yoga therapy remains relatively novel and, for some, enigmatic. The field of yoga therapy is faced with the necessary task of defining itself to inculcate an understanding of its benefits for individuals regardless of their age or ability level.

During the past several years the International Association of Yoga Therapists has spearheaded the mission to establish yoga therapy as a credible and respected complementary practice by developing educational standards for the training of yoga therapists and soon through the accreditation of schools that offer such training. This process of self-definition has required careful scrutiny and considerable discussion as individuals from varied traditions grapple with what defines yoga as therapy. This will likely remain a dynamic dialogue as the field strives to meet global consensus about how the ancient practices of yoga therapy are translated into modern health care.

Yoga therapy researchers also face the mandate of engaging in scientific *svadhyaya*, that is, a process of inquiry regarding what is being studied, the rationale for doing so, the methods being used, and the pragmatic utility of this research for yoga therapists. It involves examining which aspects of therapy can be measured, how this may be accomplished, and whether what is being studied is representative of the depth and breadth of yoga as therapy. As with most clinical disciplines that involve interpersonal processes, yoga therapy research faces the herculean task of measuring what may in the end be immeasurable.

Indra Devi, a renowned ambassador of yoga, contended that “yoga is an art and science of living.” The art lies in the practice-based evidence, the mastery of therapeutic skill, and the dialectic that occurs as therapist and client explore personal practice as a vehicle for healing and a way of being. The science rests in the vast tradition that has been transmuted for more than 5,000 years and in the ways in which ancient teachings are being translated into evidence-based practice.

This issue is dedicated to exploring the art and the science of yoga therapy. The cover epitomizes the ethereal dance of

body, mind, and spirit captured through the lens of science. It exemplifies the necessary union of these elements in the field of yoga therapy. Perspectives illustrate the balance between art and science in yoga therapy research and practice. Three articles highlight the issue of scientific integrity, including the establishment of guidelines for yoga therapy research, the need for meaningful measurement, and the importance of considering dosage effects in intervention studies. These articles are followed by a discussion of the art of therapeutic touch and the ways in which the Cleveland Clinic successfully blended art and science while establishing a yoga therapy program.

This issue is filled with wonderful examples of the union of art and science. Studies examine the effects of yoga therapy interventions for individuals with multiple sclerosis, cancer, eating disorders, diabetes mellitus, rheumatoid arthritis, stress, and depression. These articles provide excellent examples of the increasing empirical rigor emerging in the field and the myriad exciting ways in which yoga therapy is growing to meet the needs of modern health care.

The journal is also evolving to reflect the synchrony of art and science in yoga therapy. The cover design is emblematic of the journal’s ongoing commitment to innovation and excellence, and the emergence of yoga therapy in science and modern health care. The interior has been redesigned to provide a greater amount of content in fewer pages in response to the need to provide environmentally sustainable, cost-efficient materials to IAYT members. The journal continues to benefit from an esteemed editorial board and exceptional peer reviewers that are the backbone of this publication. As always, we owe a debt of gratitude to the many authors who submit original and inventive materials to the journal and who engage in the process of multiple revisions to hone and refine their ideas.

As yoga therapists, educators, practitioners, and researchers we bear the responsibility of continuing to define yoga therapy and its relationship to global health care. As we grapple with how to balance art and science, let us remember that whatever our place on the philosophical spectrum, we are united in the mission to relieve suffering and improve quality of life for all beings. In the words of T.K. Desikachar, a pioneer of yoga therapy, “Yoga exists in the world because everything is linked.” I hope that will you be inspired by the connections that emerge for you as you explore this issue.

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