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YOGA THERAPY FOR CERVICAL SPONDYLOSIS

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Abstract

Cervical spondylosis, a degenerative condition affecting the cervical spine, is one of the most common causes of neck pain, stiffness, and reduced mobility among middle-aged and elderly populations. Conventional treatments such as analgesics, physiotherapy, and surgical interventions often provide symptomatic relief but may not address long-term management and recurrence. Yoga therapy, rooted in ancient Indian wisdom, has emerged as a complementary and holistic approach for managing cervical spondylosis by integrating physical postures (āsanas), breathing practices (prāṇāyāma), and meditation techniques. Specific yogic practices such as Bhujangāsana, Makarāsana, Ardha Matsyendrāsana, and gentle neck stretches help strengthen spinal muscles, enhance flexibility, and improve posture alignment, thereby reducing strain on cervical vertebrae. Breathing exercises like Nadi Śuddhi and Bhrāmarī prāṇāyāma alleviate stress and enhance oxygenation, contributing to overall neuromuscular relaxation. Additionally, meditation and relaxation techniques modulate stress hormones, reduce psychosomatic tension, and improve quality of life. Emerging clinical evidence suggests that yoga therapy not only relieves pain and stiffness but also promotes long-term spinal health and psychosocial well-being. This abstract highlights yoga therapy as a safe, non-invasive, and sustainable adjunct for the management of cervical spondylosis, emphasizing the need for more systematic research to validate its therapeutic efficacy.

Keywords

Cervical Spondylosis, Yoga Therapy, Āsanas, Prāṇāyāma, Meditation, Spinal Health, Neck Pain Management, Stress Reduction, Holistic Healing, Psychosomatic Well-being.

Introduction

Cervical spondylosis, commonly referred to as cervical osteoarthritis, is a degenerative condition of the cervical spine that arises due to age-related changes in the intervertebral discs, vertebrae, and associated ligaments. It often manifests with symptoms such as neck pain, stiffness, restricted mobility, and, in severe cases, neurological complications like numbness or radiating pain in the upper limbs. With the increasing prevalence of sedentary lifestyles, prolonged use of computers and mobile devices, and poor postural habits, cervical spondylosis has become a growing concern across younger as well as older populations.

Conventional management of cervical spondylosis includes medication, physiotherapy, and lifestyle modifications; however, these often provide only temporary relief. In this context, **Yoga therapy offers a holistic, non-invasive, and sustainable approach** to both prevention and management. Through a combination of specific asanas (postures), pranayama (breathing practices), relaxation, and lifestyle guidance, yoga works to strengthen neck and shoulder muscles, improve spinal flexibility, enhance blood circulation, reduce stress, and correct faulty posture. Moreover, the mind-body integration fostered by yoga supports pain reduction and improves overall quality of life.

Thus, yoga therapy for cervical spondylosis not only addresses the physical symptoms but also contributes to long-term well-being by encouraging awareness, balance, and healthier lifestyle practices.

Review of Literature

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Causes for cervical spondylosis

Degeneration: The spinal disks in your neck may slowly wear down (degenerate). With time, the disks become thinner, and the soft tissue has less elasticity.

Herniation: Normal aging can cause part of your spinal disk to tear or crack. The herniation can allow the disk to bulge out, pressing on nearby tissue or a spinal nerve. This pressure can cause pain, tingling or numbness.

Osteoarthritis: It is a progressive (ongoing) condition that causes cartilage in your joints to degenerate (wear down with time). With osteoarthritis, cartilage degenerates faster than with normal aging.

Bone Spurs: When cartilage in the joints of the vertebrae in your spine starts to degenerate and bone tissue rubs directly against other bone tissue, abnormal bone growths develop along the edges of vertebrae. These growths (called osteophytes or bone spurs) are common as you age.

Category & Description: Many individuals with cervical spondylosis may not experience any noticeable symptoms. In fact, the condition is often detected incidentally during routine health checkups or imaging tests. However, when symptoms do occur, they may include:

	Category	**Description**
1	**Neck Pain/Stiffness**	Most common symptom; pain worsens with neck movements
2	**Persistent Soreness**	Continuous dull ache or nagging discomfort in the cervical region.
3	**Muscle Spasms**	Involuntary contractions of neck and shoulder muscles causing tightness
4	**Crepitus (Sounds**	Clicking, popping, or grinding noise during neck movements.
5	**Dizziness**	May occur due to nerve compression or reduced blood supply to the brain.

6	**Headaches**	Cervicogenic headaches radiating from the cervical spine to the head

Assessment of Cervical Spondylosis

The evaluation of cervical spondylosis begins with a **comprehensive physical examination** conducted by the healthcare provider. The severity and pattern of symptoms often provide important clues about the extent of cervical spine involvement. During the physical exam, the provider may assess:

- **Neck flexibility** – to identify stiffness or restricted range of motion.
- **Muscle strength** – particularly in the hands, arms, and legs.
- **Reflexes** – to detect abnormalities indicating nerve involvement.
- **Gait (walking pattern)** – to evaluate balance and coordination.
- **Neck and shoulder palpation** – to locate trigger points (small knots or bumps in the muscles that may cause pain and tenderness).

While cervical spondylosis can often be diagnosed clinically through history and physical examination, additional investigations may be required to confirm the diagnosis or determine the extent of degeneration. These may include:

- **X-rays** – to visualize cervical bones, alignment, loss of bone density, and the presence of bone spurs.
- **Computed Tomography (CT) Scan** – offers more detailed imaging of the spinal canal and bone structures.
- **Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI)** – provides detailed views of soft tissues, including cartilage, nerve roots, muscles, spinal cord, and intervertebral discs.
- **Myelogram** – a specialized CT scan using contrast dye to highlight the spinal cord and nerve roots.
- **Electromyogram (EMG)** – a nerve conduction study that evaluates how cervical spondylosis may be affecting nerve function.

Strong Affirmations

1. **Emotional Rigidity and Inflexibility**
    - Neck pain may reflect stored resistance to change, stubbornness, or rigidity in thoughts and attitudes.
2. **Unprocessed Emotions and Repression**
    - Denied, suppressed, or unexpressed emotions can manifest as tension and stiffness in the neck region.
3. **Internal Conflict and Indecision**
    - Difficulty in making decisions or unresolved conflict between the mind and the heart may contribute to chronic neck discomfort.
4. **Feelings of Pressure and Burden**
    - Persistent sensations of pressure, rejection, or rejection of self may symbolically accumulate in the cervical area.
5. **Blocked Expression and Communication**
    - The neck, being a bridge between body and head, may hold feelings of being throttled, strangled, or unable to voice one's true feelings.
6. **Sense of Restriction and Lack of Movement**
    - The inability to "turn in any direction" emotionally or mentally may correspond to physical stiffness or pain in the neck.
7. **Negative Self-Beliefs and Frustration**
    - Beliefs such as "life is a pain in the neck" or feelings of wanting to give up may intensify tension stored in the cervical region.

Methodology

The present study adopts a **yogic therapeutic approach** for managing cervical spondylosis, with a focus on integrating mudras, mantra chanting, meditation, and relaxation techniques. The methodology involves a structured yoga-based intervention program delivered to participants diagnosed with cervical spondylosis.

1. Mudra Practice

- **Vayu Mudra**: Practiced to balance the air element in the body and relieve stiffness and pain associated with cervical spondylosis.
- **Karana Mudra**: Performed to reduce stress and mental tension, thereby supporting pain relief and overall relaxation.
- **Duration**: Each mudra held for **10–15 minutes**, twice daily.

2. Mantra Chanting

- **Om Chanting**: Practiced at the beginning and end of each session for calming the mind and reducing mental distress.
- **Dhanvanthri Mantra**: Invoked for healing and inner strength, fostering a positive outlook during therapy.
- **Duration**: 5 minutes of chanting, incorporated daily.

3. Meditation

- **Mindfulness Meditation**: Participants are guided to notice the pain, remain present with the sensation, develop curiosity toward it, and repeat this practice regularly.
- **Objective**: To reduce distress and enhance coping with chronic neck pain.
- **Evidence**: Research published in *The Journal of Pain* suggests that meditation is an effective supportive treatment for reducing chronic neck pain.
- **Duration**: 15–20 minutes daily.

4. Relaxation Techniques

- **Yoga Nidra**: Practiced in supine posture to induce deep relaxation, reduce muscular tension, and restore balance in the nervous system.
- **Duration**: 20 minutes per session, thrice weekly.

5. Integration into Therapy

- Each session begins with **mudra practice and mantra chanting**, followed by **meditation**.
- The session concludes with **Yoga Nidra** to deepen relaxation and integrate therapeutic effects.
- **Total Duration**: 45–60 minutes per session.
- **Frequency**: Daily sessions for the intervention period.

Conclusion

The relationship between the **mind, emotions, and body** plays a crucial role in the manifestation and management of cervical spondylosis. Neck pain and stiffness are not only the result of structural or mechanical degeneration but may also be influenced by **psychological stress, suppressed emotions, and mental rigidity**. Through the practice of affirmations, patients can consciously release negative patterns such as inflexibility, pressure, indecision, and self-limiting beliefs, thereby creating a positive shift in both mind and body.

When combined with the techniques of **yoga therapy**, this approach offers a safe, holistic, and sustainable alternative to conventional treatments. **Meditation** calms the nervous system and reduces pain perception; **gentle stretches and asanas** improve flexibility, posture, and circulation; **relaxation practices** such as Yoga Nidra reduce muscular tension and mental distress; **mudras** help balance energy flow; and **affirmations** reprogram the mind to release rigidity and promote healing.

Together, these practices not only alleviate symptoms of cervical spondylosis but also address its psychosomatic roots, fostering **emotional balance, self-awareness, and overall well-being**. Thus, yoga

therapy—integrating body, breath, and mind—emerges as an effective and holistic alternative treatment for managing cervical spondylosis and improving quality of life.

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