

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

A LITERATURE REVIEW ON MANTRA MEDITATION

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ABSTRACT

Objective: Meditation has gained popularity in modern times as an adjunctive of therapeutic treatment. This study aimed to study meditation and use of mantra meditation in application of health problems.

Materials and methods: After searching literature through electronic databases, with regards to meditation and mantra meditation in accordance with PRISMA method was done.

Conclusion: Meditation does not deal only spiritual aspect but it has various application as complimentary in various health related problems.

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INTRODUCTION

For many years meditation has attracted clinicians, researchers, and the general public using it as an adjunctive treatment for many health-related problems.^{1, 2} It has been a spiritual activity and practice of healing for more than 5000 years.³ Meditation helps medicine achieve optimal physical and mental health. Medicine deals primarily with the 'outer world', including the body, whereas meditation deals with the 'inner world' or mind. The mind-body connection is so highly valued that it is very likely that the science of meditation will converge toward the goal of optimal functioning of the human body and mind. In complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) it is considered as practice of mind and body.⁴

The word "meditation" is derived from the Latin *meditari*, which means "to engage in contemplation or reflection." To be called meditation, the

procedure must include (1) the Use of specific well defined techniques; (2) muscle relaxation at specific moments in the process; (3) "logical relaxation." (4) It must necessarily be a self-guided state; and (5) the use of self-focus skills.⁵ Meditation can be explained as a specific and well-defined state of "thoughtless awareness" or silence of mental activity, in which mind is relaxed without reducing the level of alertness.⁶ Meditation can be defined as practice of self-regulation practices that put focus on bringing mental processes under greater voluntary control that leads to general mental well-being and development of various capacities such as calmness, clarity, and increase in concentration.⁷ In many other explanations of meditation specific emphasize has been given to relaxation, concentration, and state of alertness, decreasing in processing of logical thoughts, and development of an attitude self-observing.⁸

METHODS

Literature published between the years 2000 to 2019 was searched for by three independent researchers from the following databases: PubMed, Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, IndeMED, NIH Clinical Trials for reports related to the meditation. The types of studies included were in vivo, in-vitro and narrative reviews with regards to meditation. Case reports, animal studies, and those published in languages other than English were excluded from the study. The following keywords were used to develop the search strategy (meditation AND application, meditation AND mantra meditation, meditation AND health). The electronic database search yielded 108 articles, and after excluding the duplicates; 58 were retained following this eventually, 18 studies were included in this review.

Categorization of meditation

Traditional and contemporary meditation practices are grouping them into attentional (Concentrative meditation), constructive types, and deconstructive types. The primary cognitive mechanisms in these three families are (1) attention regulation and meta-awareness, (2) perspective taking and reappraisal, and (3) self-inquiry, respectively.⁹ The term meta-awareness term has been related to the cognitive functions including state of awareness about the processes of consciousness. Lack of Meta awareness can result into merely attention on the object without being ware of process of thinking, feeling, and perceiving.¹⁰

Concentrative meditation focuses the attention on the breath, an image, or a sound (mantra), to still the mind and allow a greater awareness and clarity to emerge. The following practices are categorized as attentional meditation types: mindfulness of breathing, breath counting, dhyana practice, samadhi practice, visualization, mantra recitation,

Kirtan Kriya, choiceless awareness, and mindfulness meditation (e.g., as taught by mindfulness-based stress reduction programs. Unlike the practice of concentration meditation, constructive meditation involves a positive process of changing the quality of thoughts and emotions and cultivating qualities like patience and calmness that help protect the mind from damage by the stresses of mundane activities. It also involves restructuring of priorities and values and a dovetailing of the mind towards more meaningful activities of life. Deconstructive type of meditation aims to undo maladaptive cognitive patterns by exploring the dynamics of perception, emotion, and cognition and generating insights into one's internal models of the self, others, and the world. A central mechanism in the deconstructive family is self-inquiry, which is defined as the process of investigating the dynamics and nature of conscious experience. Vipassana /insight meditation, Mahamudra, Dzogchen, Shikantaza/‘just sitting’, Self-inquiry, and Koan practice are listed as deconstructive types.¹¹

Other types of meditation

Rajyoga meditation, OM meditation, TM (Transcendental Meditation), Mindfulness meditation, focused meditation, movement meditation, Mantra meditation, etc.

Rajyoga meditation includes Relaxation stage that brings the mind and body into a condition of calmness and mental peace by stopping thinking of tension and stress. Stage of concentration allows to increase focus on voluntary thoughts. Stage of contemplation deals about observing into the inner self deeply. Stage of realisation helps in understanding of reality a more profound, more meaningful way. Final stage of meditation focuses awakening and regaining about state of eternal identity.¹² OM meditation includes mental

chanting of OM leads to a single thought state and a subjective feeling of deep relaxation.⁴ Movement meditation focuses on different motions which may include walking, gardening, etc. It's an active type of meditation where the meditation is guided by the movements. Mindfulness meditation has origin from teachings of Buddhism. In this type of meditation focus is given on pattern of thoughts as that passes through the mind without being involved or judging them. This practice increases concentration with alertness, which helps to focus on an object or breathe while observing bodily sensations, thoughts, or feelings.

Challenges in meditation

Time demands- time-consuming meditation

Leaning curve - references the Affective Demands and Task Demands of meditation. Affective Demands references commonly reported (12.6%) difficulty, effort, and frustration experienced in and because of meditation, especially in beginners.

Social and Interpersonal Drawbacks-

Stigma and Disconnection references perceived social stigma against meditators, feeling judged and misunderstood by others, inability to share experiences with non-meditators, and feeling disconnected from people who do not meditate.

Existential and Personal Change- it references personality changes, world view, and personal life circumstances that the participant appraised as negative and stressful as well as decreased ambition and materialism, existential realizations, and existential dread.

Negative Health Outcomes - This category references physical discomfort, such as pain or discomfort in the legs or back, and sleep disturbances, such as insomnia and drowsiness.

Negative Emotional and Psychological Outcomes-Negative Emotional Outcomes captured

negatively valenced emotional states, such as boredom, anxiety, nervousness, doubt, and fear of failure in meditation.

Some other unpleasant meditation-related experiences may be:

(i) **practice-related:** high intensity frequent sessions having long duration.

(ii) **relationship-related:** Commonly, retreats are held in silence, and take place in a secluded environment with limited access to distractions (e.g., phones, internet, books).

(iii) **practitioner-related:** meditators **who choose to attend intensive retreats might systematically differ from regular meditators** who do not attend retreats in personality, intentions, and worldviews.

(iv) **Health behavior-related:** Meditators are commonly encouraged to follow a strict schedule that limits sleep to several hours (e.g., the wake-up bell at 4 am), discourages extensive physical activity (e.g., jogging), and includes a change in diet (e.g., vegan).

Mantra meditation (mantra yoga / japa yog)

A mantra is a word or phrase generally with spiritual meaning that requires repeating silently or chanting out loud, done alone or with a group. It is the simplest type of meditation because It is easier to focus on a word than on their breath, image, etc. Above mentioned meditation challenges are the minimum in mantra meditation.

There are several ways to practice Mantra Meditation. Repeat the Mantra verbally or mentally or whisper for some time. Mantra meditation employs the use of a mentally repeated word or phrase, intending to maintain attention on those words. A mantra, usually representative of a holy name such as Jesus, the Buddha, Sri Krishna, or Divine Mother, is a word or phrase with spiritual meaning that has been handed down for generations within all major spiritual traditions. ¹³

Table 1: List of common mantras used in meditation ¹⁴

Mantra and pronunciation	Meaning
Buddhist	
Om Mani Padme Hum(Ohm Mah-nee Pod- may Hume) Namo Butsaya (Nah- mo boot-sie-yah)	An invocation to the jewel (self) in the lotus of the heart. I bow to the Buddha
Christian	
May God and my all Maranatha (Mar-uh-nah-tha) Kyrie Eleison (Kir-ee-ay Ee-lay-ee-son) Christe Eleison (Kreest-ay Ee-lay-ee-son) Jesus, Jesus or Lord Jesus Christ Hail Mary or Ave Maria	St. Francis of Assisi's mantra Lord of the heart (Aramaic) Lord have mercy, or the Lord is risen, Christ have mercy, Christ has risen Jesus, son of God Mother of Jesus
Hindu/indian	
Rama (Rah-ma) Ram Ram Sri Ram (rahm rahm shree rahm) Ohm Namah Shivaya (Om Nah-mah Shee-vy-yah) Ohm Prema (Ohm-Pray-Mah) Om Shanti(Ohm Shawn-tee) So Hum (So hum)	Eternal joy within (Variation on Rama) An invocation to beauty and fearlessness A call for universal love In invocation to eternal peace I am that Self within
Jewish	
Barukh Atiah Adonoi(Bah-ruke-Ah-tah Ah-don-aye) Ribono Shel Olam(Ree-boh-noh Shel Oh-lah) Shalom Sheheena (Sha Hee-nah)	Blessed are Thou' O Lord Lord of the Universe Peace Feminine aspect of God
Muslim	
Allah Bismallah Ir-rahman Ir-rahim (Beese-mah-lah ir-rah-mun ir-rah-heem)	One True God In the name of Allah, the merciful, the compassionate
Native american	
O Wakan Tanka	Oh, Great Spirit

Application of mantra meditation in medicine.

Research on the benefits of frequent, silent mantra repetition has shown improvements in lowering perceived stress, anxiety, and anger in veterans and healthcare providers. Mantra intervention reduced trait-anger in HIV-positive persons by enhancing positive reappraisal coping. This is the first investigation to determine that a mantra intervention may reduce trait-anger by enhancing the utilization of cognitive coping efforts. By way of improved attention, awareness, and coping skills, mantra meditation may have an extended impact on healthcare operations including (healthcare practitioner) HCP – patient interaction, quality of care, and patient safety.¹⁵ Recitation of prayer or the mantra has a similar effect to that of slow breathing, increasing arterial baroreflex which is a favorable prognostic factor in cardiac patients.¹⁶

The effect of faith/assurance on cortisol levels are enhanced by a spiritual mantra intervention in adults with HIV. Decreased cortisol could potentially benefit functioning among HIV-infected individuals.¹⁷ Increase in positive reappraisal coping during a group-based mantra intervention mediate sustained reductions in anger in HIV-positive persons. Mantra meditation may have minimal to moderate beneficial effects on mental health in the general population.¹⁸

CONCLUSION

Meditation has been part of lives since existence of human being from rudimentary level to the most recent type of meditation. Earlier meditation mainly related to the spiritual rejuvenation but in modern times many researches has put emphasis on medicinal application of it. As meditation has a

long history of existence which results into different types of mediation based on concentration, constructive and deconstructive activities. Among them mantra meditation could be considered as simplest method, which impacts not only cognitive function but have adjunctive effect on other health related issues.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author stated there is no conflict of interest.

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