

Yoga Therapy and Pain—How Yoga Therapy Serves in Comprehensive Integrative Pain Management, and How It Can Do More

Executive Summary

This white paper examines the role of yoga therapy in comprehensive integrative pain management (CIPM). How does yoga therapy contribute to integrative solutions to the current public health pain crisis, and how can the profession do more in the future?

The premise of the paper is that the primary pain problem is misunderstood and is not the headline-grabbing symptoms of the opioid crisis. Effective pain-care, which includes comprehensive management approaches, needs to start in primary care and public health interventions. Additional challenges are described: Pain-care programs, services, and interventions are not accessible or inclusive; pain literacy is weak at best and often nonexistent; and limited public awareness of yoga therapy hinders its potential contributions to CIPM.

Those contributions are detailed with an orientation to yoga and yoga therapy as well as exploration of the relationship between CIPM and yoga therapy (see Figure below).

From that context, the paper addresses the many ways in which yoga therapy can be an essential component of the multidisciplinary undertaking to improve patient outcomes and alter the trajectory of the global public health crisis of poorly understood and inadequately managed pain care.

Building on the described challenges, the paper lists recommendations to providers, consumers, payers, and legislators, who together can begin to address the many systemic and structural barriers to CIPM by including yoga therapy. We do not hold out yoga therapy as a panacea for pain care. Instead, the profession and its individual members are called to self-reflection around an enumerated list of suggestions for further professional development. Substantial work is needed on every level of yoga therapy practice to optimize the opportunities offered by CIPM. That work includes improving pain literacy, research literacy, pain care curricula and



continuing education, public education, interprofessional skills acquisition, and access to services.

The paper concludes with the context and evidence that document the effectiveness of yoga therapy interventions to support people living with pain. The extensive summary of the evidence substantiates the paper's recommendations and illustrates the research shortfalls that require attention. Subheadings drawn from the CIPM definition categorize the evidence into biomedical, psychosocial, complementary health, patient-centered, and spiritual effects. This component-based approach illustrates for the many stakeholders how yoga therapy and CIPM are related and may be more fruitfully integrated in the future of pain care and the resolution of the current pain crisis.

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Access the full paper at www.iayt.org/page/WP_YTPain

Comprehensive, integrative pain management includes biomedical, psychosocial, complementary health, and spiritual care. It is person-centered and focuses on maximizing function and wellness. Care plans are developed through a shared decision-making model that reflects the available evidence regarding optimal clinical practice and the person's goals and values.

Yoga therapy [an adjunctive complementary health practice] is the [person-centered] process of empowering individuals to progress [not by means of a singular silver-bullet solution, but with a care plan] toward improved health and wellbeing [focused on maximizing function and wellness rather than on pathologies] through the application of the teachings and [biopsychosocial-spiritual] practices of yoga.

Definitions of Comprehensive, Integrative Pain Management (CIPM) and Yoga Therapy that Highlight Commonalities Between the Approaches

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF YOGA THERAPISTS

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