

ABSTRACT

Literature Review on the Effects of Yoga Nidra on the Nervous System and Sleep

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The New Zealand Health Survey (Ministry of Health, 2023) shows that 26.8% of the population slept less than recommended in a 24-hour period. Based on the statistics available worldwide, insomnia could be a growing epidemic (Stranges et al., 2012). Relaxation techniques are one of the non-pharmacological treatments available for insomnia. Yoga Nidra is a guided relaxation technique that has gained attention for its potential therapeutic benefits. Claims about its value as a form of guided relaxation are common on the internet; with a popular claim by the founder of modern Yoga Nidra, "A single hour of Yoga Nidra is as restful as four hours of conventional sleep" (Saraswati, 2002, p.14). Despite these claims, little research exists into either Yoga Nidra as a form of guided relaxation for promoting/aiding sleep or its benefits on the nervous system. This presentation is a literature review which explores these gaps with a focus on efficacy of Yoga Nidra in managing insomnia and its potential to substitute traditional sleep. A systematic review was done to find the existing literature. As this method partially failed, a traditional literature review method was used, conducting a comprehensive search of databases for all the studies published in the Yoga and Sleep Research. The conclusions from the review suggest that sleep and Yoga Nidra state can have similar effects on brain activity and brain waves. The effects of sleep and Yoga Nidra practice on Nervous System activity measured using different measures show similarities. Studies also show that Yoga Nidra can improve sleep parameters, but the number of credible studies in Yoga Nidra and its benefits on body and sleep are limited. Yoga Nidra could promote sleep and could be a partial substitute of sleep and potentially be an interim solution to sleep issues and insomnia.

References

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