Veterans Yoga Project
Subjective Pain and Distress Analysis
2018

Veterans Yoga Project (VYP) provides Mindful Resilience Yoga (MRY) classes to veterans in multiple settings. The program is adapted to the safety, predictability and comfort needs of the veterans, including the use of adaptive and chair yoga. The yoga program is staffed by a teacher trained by Veterans Yoga Project. This analysis includes seven programs at US Department of Veterans Affairs locations and a Veterans Centers that focus on mental health, PTSD, serious mental illness, and general outpatient needs. Classes were offered across four facilities and taught by seven teachers.

Program Impact

VYP has completed an evaluation of effectiveness of the program during 140 yoga classes for the first half of 2018. Programs included:
- Charlotte VA Health Care Center PTSD Program, North Carolina
- Everette Veterans Center, Washington
- Kernersville VA Health Care Center PTSD Program, North Carolina
- Northport VA Mental Health Clinic, New York
- Northport VA Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Center, New York

Veterans provided subjective ratings of their pain and stress before and after each yoga class. These consisted of pre and post self-assessments of current pain using a numeric rating scale and stress using the Subjective Units of Distress Scale (SUDS). Both pain and stress were assessed on a scale of 0 through 10 in which zero is no pain or stress and 10 is extreme pain or stress. These scales enable the class participants, the instructor, and the clinical staff to note changes associated with each class.

Over this period pain assessments both before and after each class were reported for a total of 619 encounters. With regards to pain, 84% of all encounters were associated with a reduction in pain and the average pain reduction for all encounters was 40.9%. Further, 55% of participants experienced at least a 2-point improvement in pain, a common threshold for meaningful pain improvement in clinical settings. When pain score analysis was limited to only those encounters with pain scores of five (5) or greater at the beginning of class, 90% of encounters were associated with a reduction in pain with an average pain reduction of 34.7%. Of those, 67.8% experienced at least a 2-point improvement in pain.
Over this period stress assessments both before and after each class were reported for a total of 618 encounters. With regards to stress, 91% of all encounters were associated with a reduction in stress. The average stress reduction for all encounters was 49.3%. When stress score analysis was limited to only those encounters with stress scores of five (5) or greater at the beginning of class, 96% of encounters were associated with a reduction in stress with an average stress reduction of 42.5%.

Class participants provided 51 written and verbal statements to instructors about the classes, including:

“More relaxed”  “My shoulder got better”  “Wonderful”
“Excellent”  “Relaxing and beneficial for muscles”  “Learning a lot”
“Very relaxing”  “Class was very helpful to stressful day”  “Excellent teachers”

Respectfully Submitted,

Timothy Avery, Psy.D.
Director of Program Evaluation
Veterans Yoga Project
**Pain Change by Score Improvement (All)**

- **Decrease**: 84%
- **No Change**: 14%
- **Increase**: 2%

**Change in Pain for Total Encounters**

- **Decrease**: 84%
- **No Change**: 14%
- **Increase**: 2%

**Change in Pain for Starting Pain 5 or Higher**

- **Decrease**: 90%
- **No Change**: 1%
- **Increase**: 9%

**Improvement in Pain for Starting Pain 5 or Higher**

- **Decrease**: 75
- **No Change**: 56
- **Increase**: 5
Distress Change by Score Improvement (All)

Change in Distress for Total Encounters
- Decrease: 91%
- No Change: 9%
- Increase: 0%

Change in Distress for Starting SUDS 5 or Higher
- Decrease: 96%
- Increase: 0%
- No Change: 4%

Improvement in Distress for Starting SUDS 5 or Higher