

Efficacy of naturopathy and yoga in the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis

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Received : 14.10.2011; Accepted : 22.01.12

■ ABSTRACT

It has been seen that rheumatoid arthritis is an autoimmune disease which cannot be controlled only by the allopathic medicine. It has been claimed that naturopathy with Yoga practice enhances one's ability to focus cognitive abilities. By the regular naturopathic treatment such as massage therapy, mud therapy, hot and cold fermentations and regular practice of yoga such as Yogasanas and pranayamas regularly stimulate the immune system and significant improvements were obtained in pain disability of the rheumatoid arthritis patient. Early use of disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs and biologics has improved outcomes but requires close monitoring of disease course and adverse events.

■ **Key Words** : Naturopathy, Yoga, Rheumatoid arthritis

■ **How to cite this paper** : Thakur, Gaurav, Chawla, Ranjna and Nair, Rukamani (2012). Efficacy of naturopathy and yoga in the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis. *Internat. J. Phy. Edu.*, 5 (1) : 92-98.

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Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is a chronic autoimmune disease that causes inflammation of the joints and may cause inflammation of other tissues in the body. The immune system consists of the cells and proteins in our bodies that fight infections. Autoimmunity is the failure of body's own immune system to recognize self-tissues or cells. The resulting immune response leads to tissue damage that manifests as an autoimmune disease (Cheekatla and Agarwal, 2011). An autoimmune disease occurs when our immune system doesn't recognize part of our body and attacks it as if it were an invader such as a bacteria or virus. Amongst the genetic factors, genes that are linked to antigen recognition, antigen presentation and effector mechanisms were shown to be associated with susceptibility and severity of various autoimmune diseases. Not all individuals with genetic susceptibility will develop the disease, and in such cases environmental influences do play a crucial role¹. The most important genetic susceptibility has been linked to the major histocompatibility complex (MHC) region located on short arm of the chromosome 6. Various MHC class allotypes have been strongly correlated with a variety of autoimmune diseases, such as HLA-DR2: systemic lupus erythematosus,

multiple sclerosis (Klein, 2000). HLA-DR4: rheumatoid arthritis (Wordsworth *et al.*, 1989) amongst the environmental factors infections, drugs and chemicals are believed to be triggers of various autoimmune.

diseases (Puttini *et al.*, 2005). In rheumatoid arthritis, the immune system targets synovial membrane and attacks it. The synovial membrane secretes synovial fluid into the joint. Synovial fluid is the joint fluid that lubricates and nourishes the joints. Other tissues can also be targeted by the immune system in rheumatoid arthritis, but the synovium, or synovial membrane, is generally the primary target. When the synovial membrane is attacked, it becomes inflamed (synovitis) and can thicken and erode. As the synovial membrane is destroyed, the synovial fluid is also destroyed because it is not being secreted. The surrounding structures can also become involved leading to the joint deformities as can be seen in rheumatoid arthritis (Cooper, 2009).

Rheumatoid arthritis and its treatment may have a pathogenic relation with cancer. The possible relation also has practical implications for the care and control of rheumatic patients. Patients with rheumatoid arthritis have been shown to have an increased risk of developing lymphomas (William,