



PERCEPTIONS OF YOGA FOR WELLBEING: A SURVEY OF MEDICAL STUDENTS AND ALUMNI AT AN OSTEOPATHIC MEDICAL SCHOOL

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PURPOSE:

Yoga enhances wellbeing and is a viable option in the management of physical and psychological health concerns. We conducted a survey to understand the perceptions of yoga as a personal and healthcare practice in students and alumni of TouroCOM-NY.

This abstract describes the preliminary results of the survey.

METHODS:

- The survey was sent by email to all matriculated students of TouroCOM-NY and its alumni with the link to the online survey.
- The study was open for approximately 4 weeks.
- Participants were categorized into yogis (active practitioners), contemplators (intend to start) and nonyogis (no active practice and no intention to start).

CONCLUSIONS:

- Personal experience in yoga seemed to play a role in participating in the survey and in endorsing practices and benefits associated with yoga.
- These results suggest the importance of developing strategies to make yoga more accessible to students as part of self-care and highlight its potential as a complementary treatment modality in healthcare practice.

RESULTS:

- We received 83 responses with 70 completed submissions forming this initial dataset.
- 72.8% of respondents were females, 80% students and 72.8% between the ages of 25-34 years old.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of survey participants

Demographic Variable	Number (%)
Year in School	
Preclinical (Year 1 and 2)	42 (60%)
Clinical (Year 3 and 4)	14 (20%)
Alumni	14 (20%)
Gender	
Females	51 (72.8%)
Males	17 (24.3%)
Missing	2
Age range	
18 – 24 years old	14 (20%)
25 – 34 years old	51 (72.8%)
35 – 44 years old	4 (5.7%)
45 – 54 years old	1 (1.4%)

- All survey participants have tried yoga at least occasionally, with 37.1% yogis, 24.3% contemplators and 38.6% nonyogis.
- Across all three groups, breathing, physical poses, and mindfulness were the most common practices associated with yoga.
- Yogis were more likely to include self-compassion, living with discipline (having a routine of sports or meditation), and living with purpose or intention as additional aspects of yoga.

Table 2. Percentage of participants considering specified practices as part of yoga

Practice	Yogis	Contemplators	Nonyogis
Having compassion for others	64	41.2	18.5
Having compassion for self	88.5	64.7	48.1
Living in moderation	50	52.9	22.2
Living with discipline (having a regular routine of sports or meditation)	84.6	52.9	44.4
Living with introspection (paying attention to my thoughts and feelings)	96.2	88.2	70.4
Living with purpose or intention (dedicating myself to creating meaning)	84.6	58.8	48.1
Posture (physical poses) practice	88.5	70.6	74.1
Aspiring to a life in which body and mind connect	80.8	76.5	74.1
Becoming quiet and looking inward	80.8	58.8	55.6
Avoiding too much stimulation	57.7	41.2	48.1
Experiencing a connection to a greater whole	73.1	76.5	44.4
Breathing practices	96.2	82.4	85.2

- Personal benefits from yoga practice mentioned include stress reduction, improvement in balance and flexibility, relief of pain, and anxiety reduction.
- All participants expressed some openness in referring patients to yoga as part of treatment, with yogis (57.7%) more likely to refer patients without question compared to contemplators (29.4%) and nonyogis (25.9%).
- Conditions wherein yoga is deemed appropriate as a treatment modality include improving balance (65.7%), anxiety (62.9%) and low back pain (61.4%).