Mindfulness Meditation Eases Stress, Lowers ESR

BY NANCY WALSH
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SAN DIEGO — Participation in a program that incorporated mindfulness meditation and yoga resulted in a statistically significant reduction in psychological distress in a pilot study of patients with rheumatoid arthritis (RA), according to Kimbrough Pradhan, Ph.D., at the annual meeting of the American College of Rheumatology.

A group of 63 adults with rheumatoid arthritis (RA) was randomized to either a 2.5-hour mindfulness-based stress reduction class once a week for 8 weeks or to a wait-list control group.

Mindfulness meditation involves the cultivation of moment-to-moment awareness and attention, against a backdrop of compassion for oneself and others, said Dr. Pradhan of the Center for Integrative Medicine, University of Maryland School of Medicine, Baltimore. Participants learned meditation techniques and hatha yoga postures, and were asked to practice at home for 45 minutes to an hour 6 days each week.

RA disease status was evaluated by Disease Activity Score (DAS) 28, while psychological distress was measured by the Symptom Checklist-90-Revised.

Participants in mindfulness meditation may have made positive lifestyle changes, thereby contributing to a decrease in general inflammation.

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Within 6 weeks of UKR, patients feel comfortable, Dr. Pradhan said. The 10% decrease seen in the control group was not significant.

At 6 months, a statistically significant 33% reduction in psychological distress was seen in the meditation group, compared with a nonsignificant 2% decrease in the control group.

RA disease status was evaluated by Disease Activity Score (DAS) 28, while psychological distress was measured by the Symptom Checklist-90-Revised. Patients were predominantly female, educated, and of mid to high socioeconomic status. All were under the regular care of a rheumatologist, with 74% taking disease-modifying antirheumatic drugs, 15.9% being prescribed biologic agents, 50.8% taking nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, and 69.6% using corticosteroids.

In the meditation group, there was a 30% reduction in psychological distress at 2 months, which was a statistically significant change, Dr. Pradhan said. The 10% decrease seen in the control group was not significant.

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RA disease status was evaluated by Disease Activity Score (DAS) 28 at baseline, for each of the 3 groups.

In the treatment group, there was a 10% decrease in general inflammation.

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