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Feasibility and preliminary efficacy of online group and individual yoga for depression and anxiety in women with breast or gynecological cancer: a comparative mixed-methods study

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Background:

Depression and anxiety are common among women with cancer and negatively affect treatment, recovery, and quality of life. Accessible, home-based interventions are needed to address these symptoms.

Purpose:

To evaluate the feasibility, acceptability, and preliminary efficacy of a 6-week online yoga program delivered in either group or individual format for women with breast or gynecological cancer experiencing elevated depression and/or anxiety.

Methods:

This randomized comparative feasibility trial allocated 30 women (1:1) to weekly group or individual online yoga sessions supplemented by short home-practice videos. Eligible participants had completed chemotherapy/radiotherapy within five years and met diagnostic criteria for a mood or anxiety disorder. Outcomes were assessed at baseline, week 4, and week 6. Feasibility thresholds were defined a priori. Quantitative analyses used linear mixed models; qualitative interviews were thematically analyzed.

Results:

All feasibility targets were exceeded: 100% consent among eligible participants, 100% attending $\geq 50\%$ of sessions, and 93.3% completing post-intervention assessments. Adherence was high (mean 5.9/6 sessions), and adverse events were minimal. Across both formats, depression and anxiety significantly decreased over time ($p < 0.01$), with medium–large within-group effect sizes. Significant improvements were also observed in distress, perceived stress, fatigue, and quality of life. No significant interaction effects were found for Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS) outcomes. Participants rated the program as beneficial (92.8%) and acceptable, valuing breathing and relaxation practices. Qualitative analysis highlighted improved calmness, resilience, and usability of telehealth delivery, despite minor technological challenges.

Conclusions:

Online yoga delivered individually or in small groups is feasible, acceptable, and potentially effective for improving psychological symptoms in women with breast or gynecological cancer. Findings support the conduct of a fully powered randomized controlled trial to evaluate efficacy and inform implementation of remote integrative oncology services.

Keywords

Psycho-oncology, yoga, clinical trial, survivorship

Conflict of Interest & Ethical Approval

yes

Abstract submitters declaration

yes

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