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A tailored, side effect-targeted, yoga-based intervention for cancer survivors: development and implementation within the PREFERABLE-II LION Multinational Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT)

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Background:

Mind-body interventions such as yoga are increasingly recognized as integral components of supportive cancer care. Yoga, combining strengthening mindful movements, breathing, and relaxation techniques, has demonstrated positive effects on common cancer side effects such as cancer-related fatigue (CRF) and emotional distress. However, heterogeneity of patient needs, physical limitations related to the disease or treatment, and logistical barriers often impede participation in yoga interventions. Live-remote sessions may overcome these challenges.

Methods:

As part of the intervention in the LION RCT, live-remote yoga-based sessions were developed for cancer survivors who completed curative therapy 3-12 months ago and continue to report CRF or emotional distress. Participants receive a 12-week live-remote intervention consisting of an aerobic and resistance exercise module (2×/week) and a side effect-specific module, e.g. the CRF and emotional distress modules (1×/week), that include yoga-based exercises. These yoga-based sessions encompass Hatha and restorative yoga postures, elements from Tai Chi, breathing techniques, and guided relaxation. Modifications to floor and standing postures as well as adaptations to postures involving the arms were made to meet the specific needs of patients with limited mobility to ensure safe participation.

Results:

Each yoga-based session begins with a breathing exercise and warm-up. The CRF-focused module comprises 16 postures, designed to enhance energy regulation and reduce perceived exertion, followed by a 10-minute body scan during the relaxation phase. The emotional distress module incorporates 13 yoga postures to facilitate stress release and promote relaxation, followed by a 15-minute relaxation exercise (Body Scan, Progressive Muscle Relaxation, or Guided Imagery).

Discussion:

The developed sessions represent a side effect-targeted approach to integrating yoga into exercise oncology. The emphasis on safety, feasibility and accessibility is intended to inform best practices for evidence-based mind-body interventions. The LION trial will evaluate patient compliance, satisfaction and potential practical barriers.

Keywords

yoga-based intervention, supportive care, side effect-targeted, mindfulness

Conflict of Interest & Ethical Approval

yes

Abstract submitters declaration

yes

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