

Effect of the Transcendental Meditation Program on Quality of Life in AIDS Patients

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According to the Center for Disease Control, the number of HIV/AIDS survivors in the U.S. has increased from 168,754 in 1993 to 487,968 in 2009 (CDC, 2012). Improved survival implies that persons with HIV are vulnerable to HIV-specific and non-HIV-specific conditions such as increased stress and reduced quality of life (Desai and Landay, 2010; Kovacs et al 2010).

In a study conducted at the University of Pennsylvania, previous published research on the Transcendental Meditation (TM) program has shown improved quality of life in HIV patients, including increased vitality and reductions in HIV-specific physical problems (Chhatre, Metzger, Frank, Boyer, Thompson, Nidich, et al., 2013).

A project was undertaken with the San Francisco AIDS Foundation to teach the Transcendental Meditation program to 50 HIV patients. All participants were administered a battery of tests, following written informed consent and prior to TM instruction. After three months, the participants were again administered the same test battery. Outcomes included: perceived stress, using Cohen's Perceived Stress scale, spiritual well-being, using the Functional Assessment of Cancer Therapy (FACIT) Spiritual Well-being scale, psychological distress, using the anxiety, depression, and anger/hostility scales of the Profile of Mood States (POMS), and HIV-specific problems, using the Functional Assessment of Human Immunodeficiency Virus Infection (FAHI) physical well-being scale.

Findings from the 39 patients who completed baseline and posttesting (average age = 52) are presented. Table 1 shows that there was a significant improvement in all measured categories of quality of life and psychological distress (all p values < .0001). The strength of relationship or effect size (ES) is quite strong (all ES's are .99 or higher).

Table 1: Pretest and Posttest Scores for HIV Patients Practicing the Transcendental Meditation program

Variable	Transcendental Meditation n=39		F stat	P value	Effect Size
	Pretest	Posttest			
Spiritual Well-Being	33.72±10.13*	47.10±7.46	F(1,38)=69.33	<.0001	1.32
Perceived Stress	42.46±6.57	31.03±7.69	F(1,38)=91.01	<.0001	1.74
FAHI –HIV-specific Physical Well-Being (problems)	17.61±8.97	8.66±6.34	F(1,37)=39.92	<.0001	1.00
POMS - Anxiety	2.80±0.89	1.73±0.59	F(1,37)=57.98	<.0001	1.20
POMS - Depression	2.61±0.81	1.59±0.55	F(1,37)=57.50	<.0001	1.26
POMS-Anger/Hostility	2.36±0.87	1.50±0.51	F(1,37)=54.31	<.0001	0.99

* mean ± standard deviation

These findings suggest that the Transcendental Meditation program had a profound effect on HIV patients' levels of stress and quality of life. Specifically, there is an observed effect showing reduced perceived stress, anxiety, depressive symptoms, anger/hostility, and HIV-related physical problems and an improvement in subjects' expressed meaningfulness/purposefulness in life and faith in the future or optimism (as measured by spiritual well-being).

Adherence, or regularity of TM practice, was high.

Future studies should expand on these findings and include biochemical assessment of stress and immune functioning.