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Assessing feasibility and acceptability of yoga and group CBT for adolescents with depression: A pilot randomized clinical trial

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Abstract

Purpose: Given increasing rates of depression in adolescents, there is a clear need for innovative treatments. In this pilot randomized clinical trial, we assessed acceptability and feasibility of two group-based interventions: yoga and cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT). The goal of this work is to prepare for a future fully powered randomized trial to test the hypothesis that yoga is not inferior to an established adolescent depression treatment, namely, group CBT.

Methods: We enrolled 42 adolescents with elevated depression symptoms. Participants were randomly assigned to a 12-week group-based intervention, yoga or CBT. We had a priori feasibility and acceptability targets, including for recruitment rate, retention rate, expectancy, credibility, program satisfaction, class attendance, engagement in home practice, and instructor/leader manual adherence. We assessed adverse events, and within-subject changes in outcomes (depression, anxiety, impairment, sleep disturbance) and possible mediators (mindfulness, self-compassion).

Results: Both interventions met most acceptability and feasibility targets. The only target not met related to low engagement in home practice. Participants within each study arm showed decreased depression symptoms over time and increased self-compassion.

Conclusions: A yoga intervention appears to be acceptable and feasible to adolescents with depression. However, it may be challenging for this group to engage in unstructured home practice.

Keywords: adolescent; cognitive-behavioral therapy; depression; pilot study; yoga.

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