

## *General Practitioner's Section*

# **Meditation as Medicine**

**HL Dhar**

### **Abstract**

**Meditation as medicine is a new concept using ancient techniques. In recent decades, mind body medicine has been an important field in health care where physicians consider that process of mind has a major impact in influencing the health of the body. Still recently, interest has been created amongst chronically sick individuals in spiritual healing either through receiving blessings from highly spiritual person and/or through practice of meditation and meditation has entered the mainstream of health care as a method of stress and pain reduction.**

**Yoga of which meditation is a major component has been known for decades as a remedy for various psychosomatic disorders. Currently, clinical meditation (CM) has been introduced as a new psychological discipline. Of late, Medical meditation has been claimed to treat various diseases but one requires to learn different techniques for different disease conditions. However, its effect as anti aging medicine has gained some foot hold. Medical meditation directly rejuvenates the hypothalamus, the pituitary, the pineal and other endocrine glands. It has also been claimed as effective counter measure against stress and specific for ailments associated with aging.**

**But Transcendental meditation (TM) with its simple technique to be practiced morning and evening has been widely studied and found to be effective in wide variety of illnesses covering almost all body systems. It has been shown to increase intelligence, performance, reduce tension and illness and reverse aging process having all round effect on quality life. However, Saral meditation, a simplified version of TM but without mantra has been shown to be as effective as TM including reversal of aging. Very recently, Quantum meditation which works at conscious level has been claimed to cure incurable diseases like cancer and prevent foetal abnormality through mother, however, it requires mantra and prolonged practice.**

### **Introduction**

**M**editation is the oldest self-help technique available to human beings to bring the mind under critical observation and control to achieve harmony and dynamic health. Meditation as medicine is a new concept but the techniques that it uses are an ancient part of the wisdom tradition of India.<sup>1</sup>

Meditation refers to any of a wide variety

of spiritual practices (and their secular analogues) which emphasize mental activity or quiescence. In some religions, the meditation is regarded as a special form of the prayer. By meditation one can understand each unintentional concentration on an activity or an article. The concentration is steered thereby not by the understanding but arises as consequence of sinking. Neurologically, a meditative condition often accompanies with a change of brain wave sample.<sup>2,3</sup>

In the tradition of the yoga, different body

---

Director Research, Medical Research Centre, Bombay Hospital Trust, Mumbai 400 020.

attitudes and exercises become as well as and other kinds of the Askese chamfered used in order to support meditation. In some tradition, for example with the so called red tantra, also sexual actions and attractions are inserted to the meditation. In more recent time (starting from the end of 1970) Bhagwan shree Rajneesh developed cult meditation techniques in its Ashram in Pune on “Western” humans.<sup>4</sup> By this the dynamic meditation, the Kundalini falls – meditation, the Natraj meditation and Nadabrahma meditation.<sup>5</sup> A further meditation schedule well known in the west is the Transcendental meditation (TM).<sup>6</sup>

### **Meditation for Physical, Mental and Spiritual Health**

In recent decades, mind body medicine has been an important field in health care where physicians consider that the process of the mind has a major impact in influencing the health of the body.<sup>6</sup> Among the various types of mind-body medicine therapy, meditation remains one of the most practiced techniques and many scientific studies carried out have proven the positive effects of meditation on both mental and physical health.<sup>7</sup> It is a supreme self help method using one’s own power of concentration to overcome the mental hindrances and reach the tranquillity and harmony within. One of the famous examples of meditation is “Transcendental meditation” individuals, report feeling refreshed both physically and psychologically following meditation and the mind becomes more alert and calm, thinking process is smooth and clear and the energy level of a person is increased.<sup>6,7</sup> The second type of meditation (Vipassana) practiced, is mindfulness meditation. In this type of meditation, the main function of the mind is to understand the way things are.<sup>7</sup>

### **Meditation Therapy**

In recent years, interest has been created amongst chronically sick individuals in spiritual healing either through receiving blessings from highly spiritual person and/or through practice of meditation.<sup>8</sup> Meditation therapy has entered the mainstream of health care as a method of stress and pain reduction. For example, in an early study in 1972, Transcendental meditation was shown to effect the human metabolism by lowering the biochemical byproducts of stress such as lactate (lactic acid) and by decreasing heart rate and blood pressure and reducing favourable brain waves.<sup>9</sup>

### **Yoga**

First scientific evidence of meditation as medicine came from yoga which ends in meditation. In classical yoga, meditation serves as mirror image leading to therapeutic meditation. Hypnotherapy belongs to this category. Many substances like cannabis were used for religious or meditative purposes e.g.. North American Indians used particularly psychoactive plants containing hallucinogens in order to dive in-connection with a dance or similar ritual, into a Trance condition.<sup>10</sup>

Integrated yoga of which meditation is a major component has been known for decades as a remedy for various psychosomatic disorders.<sup>11</sup> Currently, Kundalini yoga meditation has been found to be specific for treating obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), fourth common disabling disorder world wide.<sup>12</sup>

### **Clinical Meditation**

The term Clinical meditation (CM) has been introduced in recent years as a new psychological discipline.<sup>13</sup> It is defined as a sub-field of clinical psychology and complementary counterpart of psychotherapy.

It is based on the academic knowledge gathered from the second half of 20<sup>th</sup> century on until now about the clinical application of meditation techniques originated in the East. Its goal is understanding and helping individuals to practice meditation in order to alleviate existential emotional suffering, attain state of and beyond pure emotion to ultimately realize a level of consciousness. CM supposes to be a health profession that respects the cannons of empirical science and endorses a holistic biopsychosocial and spiritual outlook of existence. Outcome studies reveal that a selection of medical techniques required favourable results in the areas of health promotion, prevention, care, healing and managerial functioning. But as yet, CM although capable of mitigating and extenuating clinical symptoms cannot make adamant claims for cure.<sup>14</sup>

### **Medical Meditation**

Meditation that deals with specific medical problems is called Medical meditation. It is so specific because it balances and regenerates the body's etherical and physical energies forging an extra ordinary healing alliance. Medical meditations have the power to cut through the negative thought patterns which so often accompany illness, thus triggering the activation of our own natural healing.

Meditative techniques are sought frequently by patients opting with medical and psychological problems. The five unique attributes that endow this type of meditation with tremendous power are special postures and movements, exact positioning of hands and fingers, particular mantras or sounds, specific breathing patterns and a unique focus of concentration. The combination of these elements can change your entire profile of endocrine neurotransmitters and hormone secretions, easing you into calm, healing,

anti-aging state.<sup>15,16</sup>

### **Meditation as Anti-aging Medicine**

While you see the visible signs of aging on the surface of your body, beneath the skin there are tell tale signs as well. Physiological studies have shown that your cardiac, pulmonary, musculoskeletal and brain functions are also declining as you become old. One of the first systems that wears out is the endocrine system, the glands that secrete hormones. Further more, the function of the immune system generally follows the function of the endocrine system. For example, production of critically important hormones such as growth hormones, begin to chop off around age 35 which is vitally important in helping you feel energetic, to repair your muscles and other tissues and to retain strong immunity. Other endocrine glands are especially vulnerable to aging. The pineal gland which produces sleep hormone melatonin, quickly declines with age until it generally becomes calcified and completely dysfunctional in most elderly people. Melatonin is also a powerful antioxidant and free radical scavenger. Similarly extremely important steroid hormone, DHEA drops off considerably causing innumerable problems. DHEA is vital for maintaining a stable body fat ratio and a high level of energy. It is also important to protect against the ravages of the stress hormone cortisone which when elevated can lead to a decline in immunity, memory loss and accelerated aging. Unbalanced stress also causes the hypothalamus, a gland considered as the "brain's brain" to decline in function resulting in loss of elasticity and flexibility. Skin loses its suppleness, memories fade, immunity wanes, sex drive declines and aging runs rampant resulting in depression and obesity, which are now at their highest rates in history among the young. Remember old

age doesn't suddenly swoop down at 60; aging starts early especially subject your body and brain to physical and emotional assault.<sup>17</sup>

Meditation is the true anti-aging medicine because it activates our bodies' own natural anti-aging healing force.<sup>18</sup> Medical meditation directly rejuvenates the hypothalamus, the pituitary, the pineal and other endocrine glands. In addition, Medical meditation is also the single most effective counter measure against stress and that it is specific for ailments including those associated with aging. However, medical meditation utilizes an array of remarkable techniques that revolutionise how doctors and patients approach the healing process. Each medical meditation has a specific physiological effect targeting afflictions from arthritis to ulcers to cancer.<sup>19</sup> Here are the value of medical meditation, a form of therapy based on Kundalini yoga a discipline.<sup>12</sup> Medical meditation is an adaptation of kundalini yoga combined with meditation, using specific breathing patterns, postures and movements, mantras and mental focus. Different medical meditations focus on different specific conditions, so once you have learned the basics, you can choose a specific Medical meditation for high blood pressure, to improve digestion, or to strengthen the immune system or the heart for example.

### **Transcendental Meditation**

There are hundreds of meditation techniques, most of which fall into one or two categories concentrative and mindfulness. During concentrative meditation attention is focused on a single sound, an object or one's breath to bring about a calm tranquil mind. During mindfulness meditation, the mind becomes aware of but does not react to the wide variety of sensations, feelings and images with a current activity. However, much research has been done on

Transcendental meditation (TM) bring about a state of deep relaxation in which body is totally at rest but mind is highly alert. The technique is a simple, natural, effortless procedure practiced for 20 minutes in the morning and evening in comfortable sitting position with eyes closed.<sup>20</sup>

Many studies have been done on TM showing it reduces tension and incidence of illness, increases intelligence and performance and reverses aging process.<sup>21</sup> Currently, Saral meditation a simplified version of TM but without mantra; its innumerable studies have also shown to be effective as TM<sup>22-24</sup> including reversal of aging process.<sup>25</sup> However, TM is a concentrative meditation technique which makes individual's awareness settle down resulting in a state of restful alertness, distinct from the commonly experienced state of walking, dreaming and deep sleep having common cure from wide variety of conditions: CNS (headache, depression, multiple sclerosis, epilepsy, stroke, digestive disorders; Addictions (smoking, alcoholism); Respiratory (asthma), Reproductive (premenstrual syndrome, impotence), Skin (acne), Immune system (AIDS) and Inter-body system (cancer).<sup>26</sup>

### **TM as Anti-aging Medicine**

Unlike Medical meditation<sup>17,19</sup> which requires specific techniques for particular disorder, TM is unique in pursuing a simple technique<sup>20</sup> having effect on various disorders including cardiac and overall anti-aging effect having long-term endocrinologic changes.<sup>27</sup> Still recently, Saral meditation has been reported as anti-aging.<sup>30</sup>

### **Quantum Meditation for Complete Reversal of Aging Process**

Very recently, a revolutionary meditation called Quantum meditation has been introduced, first of its kind anywhere claiming

reversal of aging with all its manifestations as well as cure of incurable diseases like cancer and prevention of foetal abnormality through mother.<sup>8,28,29</sup> However, it requires mantra and practice for longer period.

#### References

1. Andrew Weil University Arizona Dept. of Integrated Medicine quoted by Dharam Singh in Music and news. <http://www.wholefitness.com/meditation.html>.
2. Haynes CT, Herbert JR, Reber W, *et al.* The psycho physiology of advanced participants in the Transcendental meditation program. Correlation of EEG coherence, creativity, H – reflex recovery and experience of Transcendental consciousness. Psychophysiology laboratory centre for the study of higher states of consciousness, Maharishi European Research University, Switzerland 1976.
3. Dhar HL. Mechanism of Saral meditation without mantra that improves all round quality life. *BHJ* 2004; 26 (3) : 291-94.
4. Rajneesh O. The book series I, II, III Rajneesh, Puram Dr. Rajneesh Foundation International 1984.
5. Rajneesh O. Meditation. The first and last freedom. The Rebel Publishing 1988.
6. Barrows KA, Jacobs BP. Mint body medicine. *Med Clin North Am* 2002; 86 : 11-31.
7. Manocha R. Why meditation? *Aust Fam Physician* 2000; 29 : 1135-38.
8. Dhar HL. Meditation for the young old and for the sick. *Ind J Clin Pract* 2006; 16 (10) : 25-27, 30.
9. Wikipedia DF. Meditation. *Scientific America* 1972; 226 : 84-90.
10. Barrett B, Kiefer D, Rabago D. Meditation. *Altern Ther Health Med* 1999; 5 (4) : 40-49.
11. Udupa KN. Disorders of stress and their management by yoga. Varanasi, Banaras Hindu University 1978.
12. David S, Shannahoff-khalsa. An introduction of kundalini yoga meditation. Techniques that are specific for treatment of psychic disorders. *The J Alternative and Complementary Medicine* 2004; 10 (1) : 1-11.
13. Transcultural society for clinical meditation. Transcultural meditation studies: A new discipline. *Constructivism in Human Sciences* 2004; 6 : 95-112.
14. Haraki Y, Kaku KT (Eds). Meditation as health promotion. A lifestyle modification approach. Delft NL; Eburon, 2000.
15. Arias AJ, Steinberg K, Banga A, Trestman RL. Systemic review of the efficacy of meditation techniques as treatment for medical illness. *Alter Compl Med* 2006; 12 (8) : 817-32.
16. Dharam Singh Khalsa. Brain longevity, the pain cure and meditation as medicine <http://www.wholefitness.com/meditation.html>.
17. Dharamsingh Khalsa. Meditation an anti-aging medicine. <http://www.wholefitness.com/meditation.html>. 211.07.2005; p1-3.
18. Dhar HL. Recent advances as antiaging. *J Gerontol* 2007; 21 (1) : 87-90.
19. Dharamsingh Khalsa, Cameron Stauth. Meditation as medicine: Activate the power of your Natural Healing Force. Pocket Books 2002.
20. Dillback M. The effect of Transcendental meditation technique on anxiety level. *J Clin Psychol* 1977; 33 : 1076-78.
21. Scientific research on Maharishi's Transcendental meditation, a review Maharishi International University Press, Fairfield USA 1993.
22. Dhar HL. Meditation, health, intelligence and performance. *Medicine Update APICON* 2002; 12 (202) : 1376-79.
23. Shah AH, Joshi SV, Mehrotra PP, Naina Potdar, Dhar HL. Effect of saral meditation on intelligence, performance and cardiopulmonary function. *Ind J Med Sci* 2001; 55 (4).
24. Shah AH, Joshi SV, Naina Potdar, Dhar HL. Saral meditation : Comparative study of short and long term practice. *BHJ* 2003; 45 (4) : 586-89.
25. Dhar HL. Scientific evidences special reference to quantum meditation. *Ind J Clin Pract* 2006 (Press).
26. ORME-Johnson DW and Farrow T eds. Scientific research on Transcendental meditation program. Collected papers, vol. Rhein Weiler W Germany MERU Press 1977.
27. Oliver R, Werner, Robert K, Wallace, Barry Charles, *et al.* Long term endocrinologic changes in subjects practicing the Transcendental meditation and TM – Siddhi program. *Psychosomatic Medicine* 1986; 48 (1 and 2) : 59-65.
28. Dhar HL. Quantum meditation in reversal of aging and disease process. *BHJ* 2006; 48 (2) : 326-29.
29. Dhar HL. Current concepts of meditation. *BHJ* 2006; 48 (4) : 623-25.
30. Dhar HL. Approach to anti-aging. *BHJ* 2008 (Press).