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### The Effects of a Regular Yoga Practice on Mental Health in College Students during COVID-19

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College students often experience stress and anxiety, with many reporting increased stress and anxiety due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A regular yoga practice has been shown to reduce anxiety in this population prior to COVID-19 pandemic. **PURPOSE:** The purpose of this study was to determine if a 12 week regular yoga practice taught over Zoom would improve measures of mental health in college students during the COVID-19 pandemic. **METHODS:** Students taking Yoga 1 classes were recruited to participate in this study at the start of the semester. Students not enrolled in a yoga class were also recruited via email from various professors at the University. 32 yoga participants (Y: 23F; 20.9±1.4yrs) and 24 non-yoga participants (C: 21F; 21.0±0.7yrs) completed the entire study. At week 1, all participants responded to an online survey regarding their level of physical activity (IPAQ short form), perceived daily stress (1=low; 5=high, often difficult to handle), and state and trait anxiety (STAI forms Y1 and Y2). During the next 12 weeks, students in the yoga class participated in 150minutes/week of a regular beginner's yoga practice over Zoom. Students not enrolled in Yoga participated in their classes as usual and were asked not to make any major changes to their fitness routine. At the completion of Week 12, participants completed the follow up survey identical to baseline. Due to the small sample size and violation of normality in some variables, all variables were compared via Mann Whitney Rank Sum tests. **RESULTS:** There were no differences between groups in total MET minutes per week (MEAN±SEM: Y 4229±523 vs C 4068±645min, p=0.681), ratings of daily stress (Y 2.9±0.2 vs C 2.9±0.2, p=0.958), and STAI Y1 (Y 43.6±1.9 vs C 44.8±2.2, p=0.817) or Y2 surveys (Y 44.8±1.8 vs C 44.9±2.6, p=0.685) at baseline. There was also no difference between groups in total MET minutes per week (Y 3610±469 vs C 4155±755, p=0.714), daily stress (Y 2.7±0.2 vs C 2.8±0.2, p=0.914) STAI Y1 (Y 41.3±1.5 vs C 42.6±2.4, p=0.881) or Y2 (Y 42.7±1.7 vs C 45.4±2.3 p=0.446) surveys after 12 weeks. **CONCLUSION:** 12 weeks of a regular yoga practice taught over Zoom did not improve measures of mental health in college students during the COVID-19 pandemic. These results are not consistent with previous work that suggested the beneficial effects of regular Yoga practice on mental health.