



Mid Atlantic Regional Chapter of the American College of Sports Medicine

45th Annual Scientific Meeting, November 4th- 5th, 2022
Conference Proceedings

International Journal of Exercise Science, Issue 9, Volume 11



Characterization of Yoga-Associated Teaching Format, Barriers, And Injuries During COVID-19

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Latest evidence shows that yoga is beneficial for maintaining a healthy lifestyle and reduces stress during the COVID-19 pandemic. **PURPOSE:** To investigate whether COVID-19 affected yoga instructors (YI)' perception toward yoga teaching methodology, potential barriers, and yoga-related injuries of clients. **METHODS:** We performed a cross-sectional study design and used a web-based survey to query YI regarding their practice patterns before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. We recruited current YI from yoga studios, national yoga teacher's associations, and yoga teaching resource groups in the Northeastern US. **RESULTS:** Four hundred and seven YI completed the online survey. Respondents were primarily females (90%) that completed a bachelor's degree (46.4%) or higher (37.2%). Before the pandemic, approximately 90% of the YI taught classes using a Face-to-Face (FtoF) format followed by a mix of FtoF and online (7.4%) and an online format (2.4%). During the pandemic, 47% of the YI used the online teaching format followed by the mixed (45.9%) and FtoF (7.1%). Most of the YI who taught yoga online reported that the quality of the online yoga classes ranged from very good (45.7%) to excellent (29.0%). Most YIs (84.6%), teaching yoga online during the pandemic, were also willing to offer online yoga classes after the pandemic. The three most common barriers of teaching yoga online were: i) having technical issues (75.4%), ii) monitoring clients (66.9%), and iii) clients unable to successfully interact with the software (51.7%). A total of 5 yoga-related injuries were reported in FtoF, while 9 injury cases were reported in online yoga. The most common injury that occurred in all forms of teaching yoga was a sprain/strain. **CONCLUSION:** Online yoga was used most to deliver yoga during the pandemic. The findings of this yoga survey could inform the development of guidelines and recommendations that support safe yoga practices in various yoga teaching methods.