

## POSTER ABSTRACTS

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### Chronic Disease 14

#### Randomized Trial of Yoga and Exercise Classes for Chronic Low Back Pain

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**Background:** Yoga is an increasingly popular, but untested, complementary and alternative medical treatment that is used for relieving low back pain. Given that few treatments for lumbar pain have been proven effective and that self-care for back pain is potentially empowering to patients, evaluating self-care treatments that may help these patients live more effectively with their condition is a high priority. This study was designed to obtain preliminary estimates of the effectiveness and safety of a series of yoga classes compared with two control groups, a therapeutic exercise program and a book about self-management of back pain.

**Methods:** Patients aged 20 to 64 years with back pain for at least 3 months were recruited from Group Health Cooperative and randomized to receive either 12 weeks of yoga classes (n=36), 12 weeks of exercise classes (n=35) or a self-care book (n=30). Class participants were asked to practice at home as well. The primary outcomes measures were dysfunction (modified Roland scale) and symptom bothersomeness (0 to 10 scale). Follow-up telephone interviews were conducted after 6, 12, and 26 weeks.

**Results:** We found that all of people assigned to yoga and 94% of those assigned to exercise attended at least one class (median attendance of 9 and 8 classes, respectively). Follow-up rates exceeded 90% at all time points. Compared to the book group, the yoga group had significantly improved Roland scale scores at 6, 12, and 26 weeks in an analysis that controlled for baseline values. In a similar analysis, the yoga group had significantly reduced symptom bothersomeness at 6 and 26 weeks. No serious adverse events were reported. Only 6% of participants in each class reported taking medication or missing work because of their pain, but about one in five reported temporary discomfort or pain when performing some movements in class.

**Conclusion:** These data demonstrate that clinical trials comparing yoga classes to an active intervention and a self-care intervention are feasible, that both active interventions are relatively safe, and that yoga is a promising intervention for the treatment of back pain.