

## Yoga Therapy Study Has Positive Results

By Yvonne Henderson

The voluntary study project "The Effects of an Individual Yoga Practice on the Quality of Life for people living with MS" was conducted by Yvonne Henderson founder of sattva yoga ksetram. [www.yogaksetram.com.au](http://www.yogaksetram.com.au)

A Yoga Therapy study program held at MSWA over a 3 month period from July to September last year included a diverse group of volunteers, 8 women and 5 men aged 26 to 77 with various patterns of MS.

During the 1<sup>st</sup> month, all participants received a weekly 1 hr individual consultation. During the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> months, a 1 hr individual consultation was conducted fortnightly.

Participants were given a practice specifically tailored to their needs/abilities and encouraged to perform it daily. All received a practice sheet with diagrams and a log book to record their practice each of which was reviewed at each follow-up consultation. All practices were given in a step by step process starting with the simplest techniques. Classes evolved according to the participants' abilities and progress with any changes was made gradually.

The primary yoga tool introduced was breathing techniques. The secondary yoga tool given, where appropriate, was simple movements or simple postures - standing, sitting or in lying positions. In some cases sound

and hand/finger movements were also introduced.

From a practitioner's point of view, conducting the study project was an extremely rewarding and humbling experience which I thoroughly enjoyed. Working with such a special group of people was a privilege and a great honor.

There is always much to be assessed in these studies, with many aspects regarding the phases of MS to be taken into account however overall the breathing capacity of all participants improved by 50%. Some participants showed noticeable improvement in focus and attention, co-ordination, balance, and limb strength/stability. I am still in the process of evaluating other aspects of the study program but in the mean time here are comments



from two participants' points of view.

### Participant One

The major physical changes experienced during the 3 months were:

- Noticeable improvement in balance...
- A freeing up of my frozen shoulder, to allow arm movement up and down freely all without pain...
- The stretching and breathing associated with daily practice allowed me to use my skeleton/musculature more easily and a good reduction of neuropathic pain was experienced.
- The encouragement I received towards more progressive breathing techniques and extensions of the physical were a joy. This overall positivity gave me a great sense of control, something

sadly missing when you suffer with MS.

- Chronic fatigue was certainly not such a factor as usual in my day to day life, and I noticed a complete absence of depression/anxiety.

I would state that the overall effect of the Yoga Therapy teaching and practice over this 3 month period was profoundly good both from a physical and mental point of view. I would unequivocally endorse it for people with Multiple Sclerosis.

### Participant 2

I practiced yoga diligently throughout the three month program and I was very happy to see that by the end of the program I was managing my nerve pain much better. Even through winter, when my pain

is at its peak, I had, in fact, suffered much less, measurably less.

I use yoga to manage my pain and to enhance my quality of life. It enables me to focus better when my MS-y mind is fuzzy or cluttered with things that really shouldn't take so much attention. I find that yoga brings clarity to confusing emotional situations I experience and settles me down when I'm tangled in anger or frustration.

I practice my yoga every day and when pain is prohibitive for completing all movements, I do those that I can.

When my partner and I discussed my neck and shoulder pain (caused both by calcification of bones fractured in my 20s

and an MS lesion at the same site) at our last neurologist appointment, the neurologist agreed that he was pleased that yoga was helping so much and I wouldn't 'need' the medical procedure discussed earlier. We also noted that since starting yoga, I no longer 'click' my neck several times a day to readjust its position.

I am incredibly grateful for the program Yvonne undertook with me. It has markedly changed my daily life and enhanced my wellbeing.



## Don't forget your Flu shot?

Each year winter brings the risk of flu; flu vaccinations will soon be offered for those at risk; the young, the elderly and those with illnesses. We often get enquiries from Members asking whether they should have the vaccination or not.

Our medical advisor Dr W Carroll offers the following comment:

"There is no evidence that these vaccinations make MS worse or cause a relapse. Should one occur around the time of 'flu' vaccination it is thought to be a coincidental event. Occasionally people with

MS having vaccinations can have a brief exacerbation of existing MS symptoms but this is not worsening of the MS. People with MS are advised to discuss this with their treating neurologist or physician as soon as possible as it is essential to have the vaccination earlier rather than later to reduce the risk of contracting the flu"

**Don't forget to ask about swine flu shots as well - your GP and or neurologist can advise you on these matters.**

