

Maharishi Foundation

UK press enquiries: 01695 51213 enquiries@t-m.org.uk

Press release

Transcendental Meditation™ Helps Women with Breast Cancer

Women with breast cancer showed reduced stress and improved mental health and emotional well being after learning Transcendental Meditation, according to a new study published in the current issue of the peer-reviewed journal *Integrative Cancer Therapies* (Vol. 8, No. 3: September 2009).

"A Randomized Controlled Trial of the Effects of Transcendental Meditation on Quality of Life in Older Breast Cancer Patients" was a collaboration between Chicago's Center for Healthy Aging at Saint Joseph Hospital, and Institute for Health Services, Research and Policy Studies at Northwestern University; the Department of Psychology at Indiana State University; and the Institute for Natural Medicine and Prevention at Maharishi University of Management, Iowa, USA. The study was supported by grants from the Retirement Research Foundation of Chicago and the National Institutes of Health National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine.

"It is wonderful that physicians now have a range of interventions to use, including Transcendental Meditation, to benefit their patients with cancer," says Rhoda Pomerantz, MD, study co-author and chief of gerontology, Saint Joseph Hospital, Chicago; "I believe this approach should be appreciated and utilised more widely."

In this randomised controlled trial, quality of life measures were administered every six months for two years to 130 women with breast cancer, aged 55 years and older. Significant benefits in quality of life and improved mental health were found as a result of practising Transcendental Meditation.

Overall quality of life, the primary outcome measure of the study was measured using the Functional Assessment of Cancer Therapy-Breast (FACT-B) one of the most widely used inventories to evaluate the quality of life of breast cancer patients. It measures such characteristics as having energy, being able to meet the needs of the family, being bothered by the side effects of treatment, having to spend time in bed, feeling satisfied with how one is coping with the illness, worrying about the condition and the effect that stress has on it, being able to work and find it fulfilling, enjoying life, and feeling attractive. Results showed improved long-term benefits compared to controls in each aspect of quality of life: emotional, social, functional, and

physical.

The study also found that patients practising Transcendental Meditation showed improved mental health, compared to controls, using the Short-Form (SF)-36 mental health scale. This inventory is one of the most widely used measures in the field of medical research, and has proved useful in differentiating the health benefits produced by a wide range of different treatments. Components of the mental health scale include self-reported positive affect, less psychological distress, fewer limitations in social activities due to emotional problems, and feeling in good health.

The special contribution of Transcendental Meditation

Quality of life is a major issue for women with breast cancer, and while alternative therapies are often employed to improve quality of life, few therapies if any are both as easy to use and as scientifically supported as Transcendental Meditation (see fact sheet and website below).

Transcendental Meditation – as introduced to the world 50 years ago by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi® – differs fundamentally from other forms of meditation and relaxation. A number of studies have observed that it has a higher compliance rate than other forms of relaxation and meditation, and the breast cancer patients in the above study reported that it was easy to practise twice daily at home.

Stress contributes to the onset and progression of breast cancer

Breast cancer is the most common cancer among women in the UK with 1 in 9 women developing the condition at some point in their life, and it is a leading cause of death among women. About 80% of breast cancer occurs in women over the age of 50.

“Emotional and psychosocial stress contribute to the onset and progression of breast cancer and cancer mortality,” said Dr Sanford Nidich, lead author of the study and senior researcher at the Institute for Natural Medicine and Prevention at Maharishi University of Management, Iowa, US. Co-author Robert Schneider, MD, FACC, states: “The data from this well-designed clinical trial – and related studies – suggest that effective stress reduction with Transcendental Meditation may be useful in the prevention and treatment of breast cancer and its deleterious consequences.”

Helping manage pain as well as reducing stress

Previous studies have also revealed how this simple mental technique may help not only with stress and anxiety but also with pain (see references 1 and 2 below), which is often experienced by women suffering from breast cancer. Functional magnetic resonance imaging has been used to measure of the response of the brain to thermally induced pain. This was applied outside the meditation period and showed that long-term practitioners of Transcendental Meditation showed 40–50% fewer neural units responding to pain in the

thalamus and total brain than in healthy matched controls who were interested in the technique, but had not yet learned it. After the controls learned the technique and practised it for five months, their response also decreased by 40–50%. These results suggest that regular practice of Transcendental Meditation reduces the affective and motivational dimension of the brain's response to pain.

References:

- (1) Orme-Johnson, D.W., Schneider, R.H., Son, Y.D., Nidich, S., & Cho, Z.H. (2006). Neuroimaging of meditation's effect on brain reactivity to pain. *Neuroreport*, 17, 1359–1363.
- (2) Eppley, K.R., Abrams, A.I., AND Shear, J. 1989. Differential effects of relaxation techniques on trait anxiety: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 45(6), 957-974.

Key facts about Breast Cancer

- Breast cancer is the most common cancer in women – and remains a leading cause of death.
- Breast cancer incidence in the United Kingdom is 1 in 9 (about 11%).
- In 2005 over 45,600 women were diagnosed with breast cancer in the UK.
- Women above the age of 50 have nearly four times the incidence compared to women under 50.
- Newly diagnosed and long-term survivors are affected by impairment in quality of life (QOL), in emotional, physical, functional, social, and spiritual domains.
- Psychosocial stress contributes to the onset, progression, and mortality from this disease.
- Clinical diagnosis of breast cancer increases psychological distress, with sustained distress occurring during cancer treatment, and continuing long-term.
- There have been an increasing number of women using complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) for female-specific cancers. Seven studies in the UK between 1992 and 2003 found that up to 52% of cancer sufferers used alternative therapies and that the rate was highest among women. In the USA, recent studies indicate that CAM use among women with breast cancer may be as high as 90 percent.

Key facts about Transcendental Meditation

- Transcendental Meditation, as taught by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, is an effortless technique practised for 20 minutes twice a day sitting comfortably with eyes closed.

- Transcendental Meditation is not a religion or philosophy and does not involve any belief or change in lifestyle.
- More than 300 independently published research studies and reviews of research on Transcendental Meditation confirm a range of benefits for mind, body, and behaviour. For a printable research review, and a bibliography of 340 papers from independent peer-reviewed journals and other edited scientific publications, see <http://www.t-m.org.uk/research.shtml>.
- Several studies have compared the effects of different meditation practices and found that Transcendental Meditation provides deeper relaxation and is more effective at reducing anxiety, high blood pressure, smoking, alcohol consumption, and drug abuse, and improving cognitive performance and overall psychological health and well-being than other forms of meditation and relaxation. In addition, no other meditation practice shows the widespread coherence throughout all areas the brain that is seen with Transcendental Meditation.
- More information on Transcendental Meditation can be obtained in the UK by calling 01695 51213 or visiting <http://www.t-m.org.uk>.

Transcendental Meditation™, founded by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi®, is available in the UK only from Maharishi Foundation®, registered educational charity number 270157 (in Northern Ireland charity number X0610/9, an affiliate of Maharishi Foundation). Please note that no other organisation in the UK offers courses in Transcendental Meditation, as taught by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi.

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