OBJECTIVE:
To evaluate feasibility, efficacy, and tolerability of Sudarshan Kriya yoga (SKY) as an adjunctive intervention in patients with major depressive disorder (MDD) with inadequate response to antidepressant treatment.

METHODS:
Patients with MDD (defined by DSM-IV-TR) who were depressed despite ≥ 8 weeks of antidepressant treatment were randomized to SKY or a waitlist control (delayed yoga) arm for 8 weeks. The primary efficacy end point was change in 17-item Hamilton Depression Rating Scale (HDRS-17) total score from baseline to 2 months. The key secondary efficacy end points were change in Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) and Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI) total scores. Analyses of the intent-to-treat (ITT) and completer sample were performed. The study was conducted at the University of Pennsylvania between October 2014 and December 2015.

RESULTS:
In the ITT sample (n = 25), the SKY arm (n = 13) showed a greater improvement in HDRS-17 total score compared to waitlist control (n = 12) (-9.77 vs 0.50, P = .0032). SKY also showed greater reduction in BDI total score versus waitlist control (-17.23 vs -1.75, P = .0101). Mean changes in BAI total score from baseline were significantly greater for SKY than waitlist (ITT mean difference: -5.19; 95% CI, -0.93 to -9.34; P = .0097; completer mean difference: -6.23; 95% CI, -1.39 to -11.07; P = .0005). No adverse events were reported.

CONCLUSIONS:
Results of this randomized, waitlist-controlled pilot study suggest the feasibility and promise of an adjunctive SKY-based intervention for patients with MDD who have not responded to antidepressants. TRIAL REGISTRATION: ClinicalTrials.gov identifier: NCT02616549.