

Janakiramaiah N, Gangadhar BN, Naga Venkatesha Murthy PJ, et al: Antidepressant efficacy of Sudarshan Kriya yoga (SKY) in melancholia: a randomized comparison with electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) and imipramine. J Affect Disord 2000;57(1-3):255-9.

In a randomized, controlled study, 45 patients hospitalized with severe melancholic depression were divided into three groups. The first group received bilateral electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) three times weekly for 4 weeks. The second group received antidepressant medication: imipramine 150 mg nightly. The third group received training in Sudarshan Kriya and accompanying breathing techniques (SKY) and were encouraged to practice once daily.

SKY was as effective as standard antidepressant drug therapy (67% remission rate), and almost as effective as ECT, as indicated by reductions in Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) and Hamilton Rating Scale for Depression (HRSD) total scores. Considering the severity of the patients' depressions, the remission rate of 67% with SKY is impressive and suggests that it offers an effective alternative, even in severe depression. Furthermore, it is self-administered and free of the side effects that can be caused by ECT or imipramine.