

Some mind-body therapies may reduce effects of functional bowel disorders

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(Medical Xpress)—Although some health care providers may overlook alternative therapies when treating functional bowel disorders such as irritable bowel syndrome, University of Florida faculty members have found evidence that hypnosis and cognitive behavioral therapy may benefit patients suffering from these diseases.

Led by researchers Oliver Grundmann of the UF College of Pharmacy and Saunjoo "Sunny" Yoon of the UF College of Nursing, the study was published in the *European Journal of Integrative Medicine*, which highlighted it as the "Editors Choice" in its August issue.

"Our work being highlighted in this way indicates that we are able to raise awareness for the issue of a more integrative and holistic approach to medical care in the area of functional bowel disorders in the scientific community—a goal that both Dr. Yoon and I have been striving for in our professional endeavors for many years," said Grundmann, a clinical assistant professor in the College of Pharmacy.

The researchers reviewed 19 recent [clinical trials](#) to examine the potential benefits of using four common mind-body therapies—yoga, hypnotherapy, [cognitive behavioral therapy](#) and biofeedback—in the treatment of functional bowel disorders. In particular, the researchers found indications there were some benefits to hypnotherapy and cognitive behavioral therapy.

"It is still very hard to replicate some of the studies or generalize the

findings," said Yoon, an associate professor in the College of Nursing, adding there is a need for more studies. "Some of the research methodologies are not consistent from one study to another and some of the studies have a small sample size or the designs do not provide the rigor or obvious protocol."

Functional bowel disorders occur when the stomach and bowels aren't working properly and are typically accompanied by stomach pain, bloating and other intestinal symptoms. Treatments typically target these symptoms.

For about five years, Yoon and Grundmann have been studying and publishing material on complementary and alternative medicine, which includes treatments with dietary supplements, acupuncture and yoga.

Because functional bowel disorders are chronic conditions that come and go over time, patients sometimes develop negative attitudes that can affect treatments. Cognitive behavioral therapy is used in an attempt to help patients feel more positive. In one study the researchers examined, cognitive behavioral therapy worked as well as antidepressant medications.

Hypnosis, on the other hand, is used in an attempt to reduce pain. Some of the studies the researchers reviewed showed that hypnotherapy worked as well as medication to reduce pain in patients.

But although the results were promising, they were not conclusive, Yoon said.

"A lot of times we get contradictory results from the clinical trials, so it can be confusing for the readers or the clinicians when they read it," Yoon said. "Our article can give them a better picture or better view about currently available clinical trials and the results of the trials."

Yoon said doctors should not exclude complementary therapies when treating functional [bowel disorders](#).

"We just need to have an open mind to the therapies that are not familiar in Western countries," Yoon said.

More information:

authors.elsevier.com/sd/article/S1876382013000590

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