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Yoga, dance and music can benefit patients

 Prachi Pinglay, Hindustan Times
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Shail Pandey, 64, spends a large part of her day playing with colour on a canvass. A Parkinson's disease patient for 14 years now she considers herself lucky for being able to paint. Doctors and support groups said patients who engage in creative activities such as art, music, dance and yoga are said to do better than those who don't.

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"Painting helps me relax because I am often awake at night and feel low. I give my paintings to other patients, doctors and friends. I've a sleep disorder and if I don't do something positive and creative, it can get depressing," said 64-year-old Pandey as she positioned herself in front of the canvass. The Parkinson Disease and Movement Disorder Society (PDMDS), set up in 2001, has been innovating and adding several support group activities such as dance therapy, yoga and the latest - a group physiotherapy class.

"Apart from medication, these alternative therapies are also useful for patients. Patients not only improve their motor skills with physiotherapy but also feel better with art and music sessions," said Dr Maria Baretto, head of PDMDS Society.

In 2005, PDMDS conducted a study with the Iyengar Yogashraya, a yoga institute to check benefits of yoga on 60 patients. It was found that those who did yoga for three months had better mobility, higher sense of well-being and improved coping skills. Now, they have tied up with Iyengar Yogashraya and conduct special sessions for Parkinson's patients. More than 250 patients have attended these sessions.

On World Parkinson's Day on April 11, a group of patients prepared and performed an inspirational song at Bombay Hospital. "Patients tend to be confined to home because of movement limitations. So, the group meetings and activities help them to know that there are more people like them. Otherwise patients may become self-conscious and have psychological problems as well," said Dr Baretto.

"I am as close to my support group as I am to my family. When we all meet, you realise that others have more problems than you and you start feeling better about yourself. Also, they understand exactly how you feel, when it comes to fear of being dependent and immobile," said Pandey.

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