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Yoga Therapy Research Highlight: *Viniyoga Stress Reduction Program* *Aetna Mind-Body Pilot*

Gary Kraftsow developed ***Viniyoga Stress Reduction Program***, a 12-week Viniyoga-based program pilot for Aetna employees. The intervention progressively introduced tools for managing stress, including:

- asana (physical postures of yoga),
- breathing techniques,
- guided relaxation,
- mental techniques, and
- education on starting a home practice.

The intervention targeted 6 goals for participants:

- 1) relieve musculoskeletal tension in the back, neck and shoulders,
- 2) relieve headaches that are caused by musculoskeletal tension,
- 3) improve sleep,
- 4) increase feelings of well-being,
- 5) improve coping strategies for dealing with stressful events and the subsequent negative symptoms of stress, and
- 6) promote adoption of home and office strategies for reducing stress through yoga.

This intervention included a weekly on-site yoga class, home and office practice tools, and for half of the participants, the DVD *Viniyoga Therapy for Upper Back, Neck, and Shoulders* by Gary Kraftsow. Participants were asked to track class attendance and frequency per week and time spent in home and office practice methods.

The intervention was implemented March - May 2010 in Walnut Creek, California, and Hartford, Connecticut. Preliminary results showed statistically significant results in reducing perceived levels of stress. A full study analysis is currently being conducted by Aetna and is expected in 2011.