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New study offers scientific evidence on impact of Isha meditation program

21 June 2019, Coimbatore: Researchers from the Indiana University School of Medicine have released new evidence-based study findings on the beneficial effects of Isha Foundation's advanced 4-day Advanced Inner Engineering Retreat. Senthilkumar Sadhasivam, MD, Vice-Chair of Research, Department of Anesthesia at the Indiana University School of Medicine led the research effort. Researchers from Harvard Medical School and Rutgers also contributed to the study. The findings have been published in the Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine journal, Vol. 2020.

"Endocannabinoids (eCBs), lipid mediators associated with improved happiness, enhanced mood, and reduced anxiety/depression, have not been previously studied as biomarkers of meditation effects. The study aimed to assess biomarkers (eCBs and brain-derived neurotrophic factor [BDNF]), and psychological parameters after Inner Engineering and Advanced Inner Engineering Retreat Program," the researchers said in a statement.

The process included pre and post-retreat program observational studies, online surveys and voluntary blood sampling to measure the level of biomarkers that naturally enhance happiness, mood, and lower anxiety and depression. The study included findings of immediate post-program results as well as one month post-program results to indicate short-term and sustained impact of the inner engineering practices and the retreat.

Happiness, mindfulness, and psychological well-being increased significantly from baseline to immediately post program. Depression and anxiety decreased significantly

(26% and 23% respectively). These improvements were maintained at the one-month followup. Similarly, compared to the baseline, endocannabinoids including anandamide (“bliss molecule”) and BDNF levels were significantly higher after the retreat with some individuals showing multiple-fold increases in anandamide.

If you would like to know more about this, please write to mediarelations@ishafoundation.org.