This study aims to test the effects of yoga on health-related quality of life, life satisfaction, cancer-related fatigue, mindfulness, and spirituality compared to conventional therapeutic exercises during (neo)adjuvant cytotoxic and endocrine therapy in women with breast cancer. In a randomized controlled trial 92 women with breast cancer undergoing oncological treatment were randomly enrolled for a yoga intervention (YI) (n = 45) or for a physical exercise intervention (PEI) (n = 47). Measurements were obtained before (t 0) and after the intervention (t 1) as well as 3 months after finishing intervention (t 2) using standardized questionnaires. Life satisfaction and fatigue improved under PEI (p< 0.05) but not under YI (t 0 to t 2). Regarding quality of life (EORTC QLQ-C30) a direct effect (t 0 to t 1; p< 0.001) of YI was found on role and emotional functioning, while under PEI only emotional functioning improved. Significant improvements (p< 0.001) were observed at both t 1 and t 2 also for symptom scales in both groups: dyspnea, appetite loss, constipation, and diarrhea. There was no significant difference between therapies for none of the analyzed variables neither for t 1 nor for t 2.
During chemotherapy, yoga was not seen as more helpful than conventional therapeutic exercises. This does not argue against its use in the recovery phase.