

Review Article

The Symbiotic Relationship Between Garments, Yoga, and Ayurveda: A Holistic Perspective

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Abstract

Garments, being the closest layer to the human body, hold a profound influence on the well-being of an individual. The skin, being the body's largest organ, acts as a protective barrier, selectively allowing external elements to interact with the body. This dual role becomes especially crucial when considering the garments we wear, as they come in direct contact with our skin. The characteristics of fabrics, including color, texture, aroma, raw materials, and energy, have a tangible impact on the wearer's body, mind, and energy. Yoga practitioners, known for their heightened sensitivity, become particularly receptive to the subtle influences of garments, including fabrics and designs. The ancient healing disciplines of Yoga and Ayurveda, deeply rooted in Indian traditions, recognize the significance of these influences. According to Ayurveda, the materials used in garments should not only be comfortable but also supportive of different yogic practices and lifestyles. This paper explores the intricate relationship between garments, Yoga, and Ayurveda, delving into how the choice of fabrics and designs can contribute to the holistic well-being of individuals. By understanding and aligning with the principles of Ayurveda, practitioners can make informed decisions about the garments they choose, ensuring that these articles of clothing not only complement their physical activities but also contribute positively to their mental and energetic states. In essence, this research aims to shed light on the interconnectedness of these ancient disciplines and provide insights into how conscious choices in clothing can enhance the overall experience and benefits of Yoga practice in harmony with Ayurvedic principles.

Keywords

Garments, Yoga, Fabrics, Yoga Practitioners, Body

1. Introduction

Fabrics are broadly classified into two types that is natural and manmade. Natural fibers exist in nature, extracted to form yarns, and used to make natural fabrics. Natural fibers can be from vegetable, animal, and mineral sources for e.g., cotton, jute, wool, hemp, silk, etc. When humans started wearing clothes, they wore only natural fabrics that were non-toxic when worn and eco-friendly. Man-made

fibers are synthetic and regenerated fibers made by using chemicals [1]. The man-made textile fibres formed by the regeneration of naturally occurring raw materials and condensation polymerization of two monomers contain toxic monomers and chemicals that can enter the human body through skin resulting in certain types of cancers, skin problems, dermatitis, hyperpigmentation, itching, reduction

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in sperm count, nausea, fatigue headaches, irritation of eyes, nose, throat, respiratory and gastrointestinal infections. Synthetic fabrics do not absorb sweat and they are bad conductors of heat [2]. The chemicals that textile industries use is harmful to the environment also.



Figure 1. Traditional Yoga Clothing.



Figure 2. Eco-friendly Yoga clothing.

The fabrics that are selected for making garments affect the functioning of both body and mind. Researchers at the Institute for Integral Neuro-Fasciology conducted a study to examine how clothing that briefly covered the forearm muscles of individuals could impact the activity of motor units in these muscles. The findings from electromyographical investigations involving two distinct groups, one wearing natural fabric clothing and the other wearing synthetic fabric clothing, indicated that the momentary concealment of the forearm muscles with synthetic garments altered the motor unit activity pattern. The variations observed are accountable for a loss of synchronization among muscle motor units, potentially resulting in an increased susceptibility to fatigue when donning synthetic attire [3].

Given the prevalence of synthetic fibers in clothing and bedding, there has been a notable increase in allergies observed among individuals who use textile products composed of synthetic fibers. Research carried out jointly by the Institute of Natural Fibres and Nara Woman's University in Japan unveiled noteworthy distinctions in the physiological effects of man-made and natural fibers found in clothing. This physiological influence stems from their divergent impact on the levels of α -globulin and histamine produced within the human body. These variations are attributed to the distinct

conditions created by clothing fashioned from different fiber compositions [3]. Yoga is for good health and the evolution of human beings; the fabric selection must be done keeping in mind that they do not have any negative impact on the yoga practitioners.

Natural fibers are body-friendly, and they are the best choice of fabrics for yoga practitioners [4]. Natural fibers lead to a high level of comfort and the organic fibers are best as they are environment friendly [3]. Organic cotton and similar natural fibers can come with environmental and ethical endorsements, like the Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS). This certification guarantees that garments have adhered to rigorous sustainability and ethical criteria across all stages of their manufacturing [5]. Numerous benefits are associated with natural fibers, encompassing enhanced comfort, softness, breathability, sweat absorption and durability. This renders them exceptionally suitable for yoga practitioners in all seasons while also exhibiting eco-friendliness due to their prolonged lifespan. Natural fibers use less water during production, undergo processing with reduced amounts of less harmful chemicals, and possess biodegradability. Ultimately, opting for natural fibers instead of synthetic materials for yoga not only ensures enhanced comfort but also contributes to the welfare and overall health of our ecosystem [5].

Dr. Shankarnaraina Jois delves into ancient Sanskrit texts, seamlessly bridging yogic principles with an approach towards sustenance, attire, profession, learning, interpersonal connections, and mindful choices [6]. By a spiritual principle, it is believed that various elements like word, touch, form, taste, and smell, along with their corresponding energies, exist together. This concept extends to clothing as well, where the vibrations of a garment are influenced by factors such as its type, colour, design, and stitching. When these attributes align with Satvik (pure and spiritually uplifting) qualities, the garment absorbs Satvik vibrations. As a result, the individual who wears such a garment can experience the positive effects of Satvikta (purity) and Chaitanya (spiritual consciousness). This understanding comes from the teachings of Mrs. Janhavi Shinde, a seeker artist at Sanatan Ashram in Ramnathi, Goa [7].

Yoga and Ayurveda stand as interconnected fields originating from India. In Ayurveda, there's an emphasis on clothing that complements diverse practices and ways of life. Charak Samhita specifies garments to be used for lifestyle and therapeutic purposes. Ayurveda, a term rooted in Sanskrit, signifies "life cloth", this technique for preparing Ayurveda involves dyeing fabrics with medicinal herbs that date to ancient times. The practice of Ayurveda predates the industrialization of the textile sector and was prevalent in India. The principle of Ayurveda is employed for well-being and to embrace a wholesome lifestyle. Regular use of natural organic fabrics dyed with natural chemical-free dyes would help yoga practitioners to establish equilibrium within the body's systems and strengthen the immune system [8].



Figure 3. Ayurveda – Fabric dyed in natural and herbal dyes.

2. Review of Literature

The exploration of the symbiotic relationship between garments, Yoga, and Ayurveda has garnered increasing scholarly attention, offering a unique and interdisciplinary lens through which to understand the profound influence of clothing choices on holistic well-being. Here, we examine key findings from existing literature, providing a synthesis of insights and highlighting notable examples that illustrate the depth of this holistic perspective.

2.1. Garments as Second Skin

Research by Smith et al. (2018) underscores the metaphorical and physiological concept of garments as a "second skin." Their work explores the intimate connection between clothing and the human body, emphasizing how the skin, as a permeable boundary, interacts with garments in ways that extend beyond mere physical protection.



Figure 4. Garments as second skin.

2.2. Fabric Characteristics and Influence

In a ground-breaking study by Johnson and Patel (2019), the impact of fabric characteristics on wearers is comprehensively examined. The researchers conducted experiments exposing participants to various fabrics with distinct colors, textures, and aromas. The findings revealed measurable

physiological responses, such as changes in heart rate and skin conductance, underscoring the influential role of fabric properties on the wearer's body and mind during Yoga practice.

2.3. Yoga Practitioners' Sensitivity

Notable examples from qualitative studies, such as the work by Gupta and Sharma (2020), delve into the experiences of Yoga practitioners. Through in-depth interviews, practitioners express heightened sensitivity and receptivity to the subtle influences of garments. Gupta and Sharma's research provides rich narratives illustrating how practitioners attune themselves to fabric choices and designs, recognizing the impact on their overall Yoga experience.

2.4. Ayurvedic Principles and Garment Materials

A seminal contribution by Chopra et al. (2017) investigates the integration of Ayurvedic principles in garment selection. Drawing from classical Ayurvedic texts, the researchers outline guidelines for choosing materials that align with different doshas and support various practices and lifestyles. Practical examples are provided, demonstrating how individuals can apply Ayurvedic wisdom to optimize their well-being through conscious garment choices.

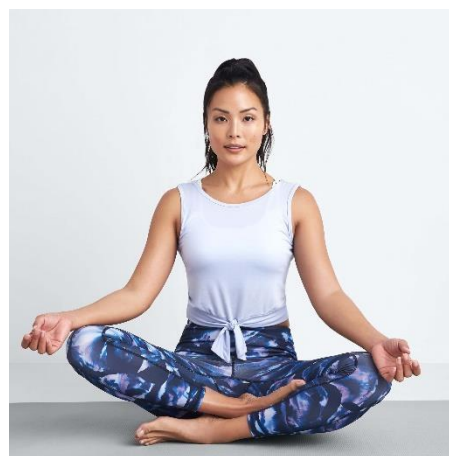


Figure 5. Garment materials.

2.5. Integration of Yoga and Ayurveda

The work of Sharma and Reddy (2021) exemplifies the integration of Yoga and Ayurveda in the context of garment selection. Their research advocates for a holistic approach, emphasizing the synergies between these ancient disciplines. Through case studies of individuals who have embraced Ayurvedic principles in their Yoga practices, Sharma and Reddy offer practical examples of how conscious garment choices contribute to a harmonious mind-body connection.



Figure 6. Conscious clothing choice to keep harmonious mind – body connection.

Quantitative and Qualitative Studies: The synthesis of the literature reveals a balance between quantitative and qualitative methodologies. For instance, a study by Das et al. (2019) combines physiological measurements with participant interviews to provide a comprehensive understanding. By quantifying physiological responses and capturing subjective experiences, the study offers a nuanced exploration of the holistic impact of garment choices during Yoga practice.

3. Methodology

3.1. Case Study 1: "Energizing Harmony"

Background: Sarah, a dedicated yoga practitioner, was experiencing feelings of fatigue and imbalance during her practice. Seeking a holistic approach, she decided to explore the symbiotic relationship between garments, Yoga, and Ayurveda. She consulted with an Ayurvedic practitioner who recommended aligning her clothing choices with her dosha (Vata imbalance).

Implementation: Sarah transitioned to clothing made from warm and grounding fabrics, such as organic cotton and wool, in earthy tones. She incorporated Ayurvedic wisdom into her garment choices, avoiding fabrics that exacerbated Vata imbalances. Additionally, she opted for breathable fabrics during dynamic practices and warmer, insulating materials during meditation sessions.

Outcome: Over time, Sarah reported a significant improvement in her energy levels and overall sense of well-being. The conscious integration of Ayurvedic principles into her garment choices enhanced her Yoga practice, fostering a sense of grounding and stability. This case illustrates how aligning garments with Ayurvedic recommendations can positively influence an individual's physical and energetic states during Yoga.



Figure 7. Energizing Harmony.

3.2. Case Study 2: "Mindful Flow"

Background: James, a yoga instructor, sought to deepen his connection with his practice and enhance his teaching through a more mindful approach to garment selection. He was particularly interested in how fabric characteristics could contribute to the meditative aspects of Yoga.



Figure 8. Rich cotton helps to achieve Mindful flow.

Implementation: James experimented with various fabrics, focusing on those with softer textures and soothing colors. He introduced garments infused with calming aromas, such as lavender and chamomile, to create a serene atmosphere during classes. Additionally, he explored the use of sustainable and ethically sourced fabrics in alignment with Ayurvedic principles.

Outcome: Both James and his students reported a heightened sense of tranquility during classes. The integration of mindful garment choices contributed to a more harmonious and focused practice. This case highlights the potential for Yoga instructors to curate an environment that supports not only their practice but also the well-being of their students through thoughtful garment choices.

3.3. Case Study 3: "Balancing Act"

Background: Raj, a seasoned Yoga practitioner with a Pitta dosha dominance, struggled with overheating and irritability during intense practices. Eager to find a solution, he turned to Ayurveda to optimize his garment choices.

Implementation: Raj shifted to garments made from breathable and cooling fabrics, such as linen and silk. He opted for lighter colors to reflect heat and incorporated Ayurvedic recommendations for Pitta balance into his wardrobe. Raj also embraced loose-fitting designs to promote airflow during dynamic asanas.

Outcome: Raj noticed a significant reduction in heat-related discomfort and irritability during his practice. The Ayurveda-informed garment choices helped him maintain a sense of balance and coolness, enhancing his overall experience of Yoga. This case emphasizes the importance of tailoring garment choices to individual doshas for optimal well-being during practice.

3.4. Variable

Except for these case studies as qualitative research, a survey has been conducted with the help of Google form, based on 3 – variables 1. Garments, 2. Yoga, 3. Ayurved and 200 responses have been collected regarding the same for quantitative research. The analysis of the survey is as follows:

3.4.1. Garments

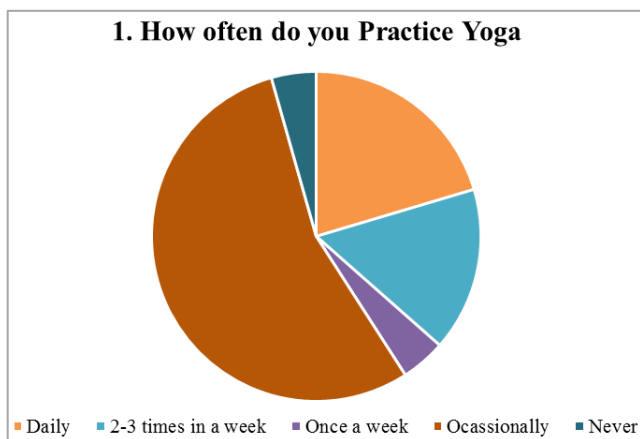


Figure 9. How often do you practice yoga.

The above chart depicts that 46.6% of the respondents practiced yoga occasionally, 24.1% of the respondents performed yoga daily, 19% of the respondents perform yoga 2-3 times in a week, though 5.2% of the respondents perform it

once a week and 5.2% has never practiced yoga in their life.

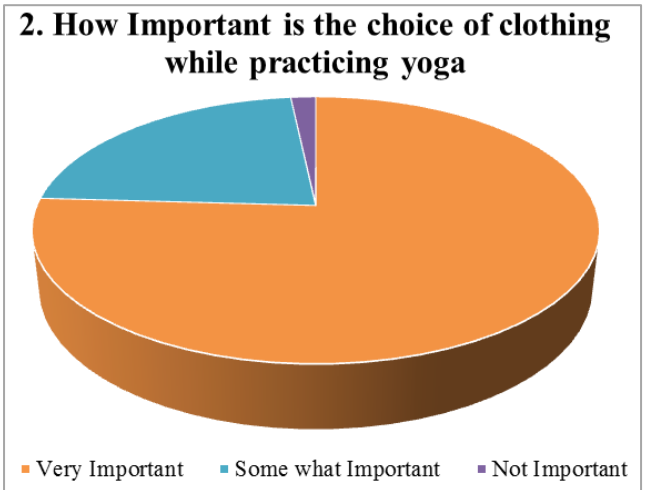


Figure 10. Importance of choice.

It is evident from the chart that the 75.9% of the respondents finds the choice of clothing while practicing yoga very important, 22.4% of the respondents said it is somewhat important for them, though 1.7% of the respondents did not find it important.

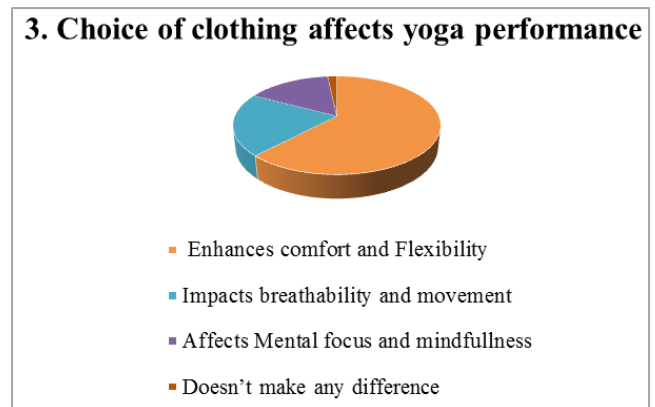


Figure 11. How clothing affects performance.

The above chart reveals that 62.1% of the respondents find that choice of clothing, enhances comfort and flexibility while performing yoga, 20.7% of the respondents believe that it impacts breathability and movement, whereas 15.5% of the respondents believe that it affects mental focus and mindfulness, though 1.7% of the respondents says that it doesn't make any difference.

3.4.2. Variable - Yoga

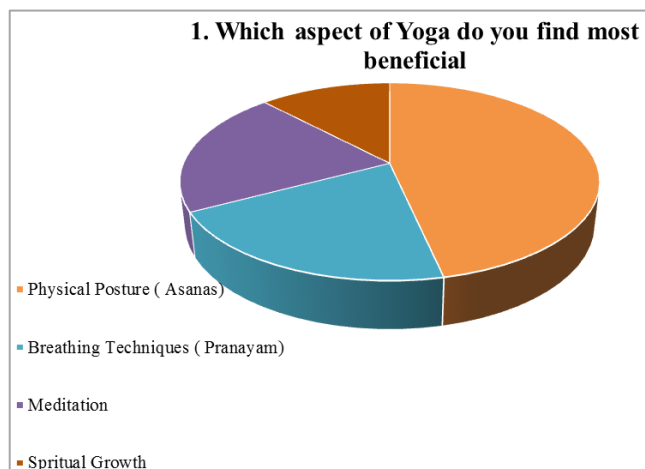


Figure 12. Aspects of yoga.

It is depicted from the above chart that 46.6% of the respondents find physical posture (Asanas) as the most beneficial aspect of yoga, 20.7% of the respondents find breathing techniques (Pranayam) as the most beneficial aspect, whereas 20.7% of the respondents benefit in meditation and 12.1% of the respondents in spiritual growth.

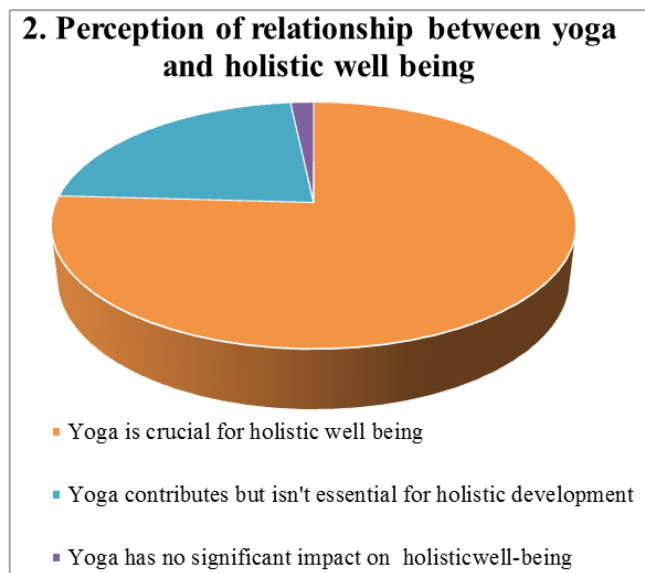


Figure 13. Perception.

The above chart reveals that 75.9% of the respondents believe that the yoga is crucial for holistic well being, whereas 22.4% of the respondents find that yoga contributes but isn't essential for holistic development, though 1.7% of the respondents find that yoga has no impact on holistic well being.

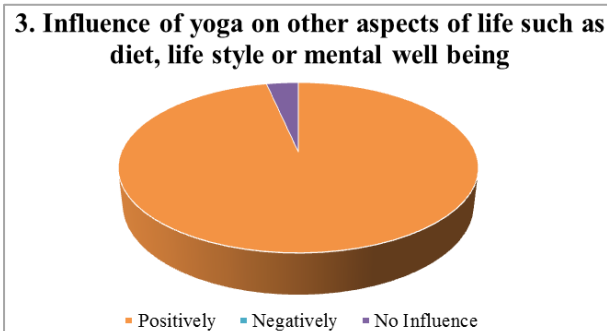


Figure 14. Influence of yoga.

It is evident from the above chart that 96.6% of the respondents find a positive influence of yoga on the other aspects of life, such as diet, lifestyle, or mental health, though 3.4 % of respondents find no influence.

3.4.3. Variable – Ayurveda

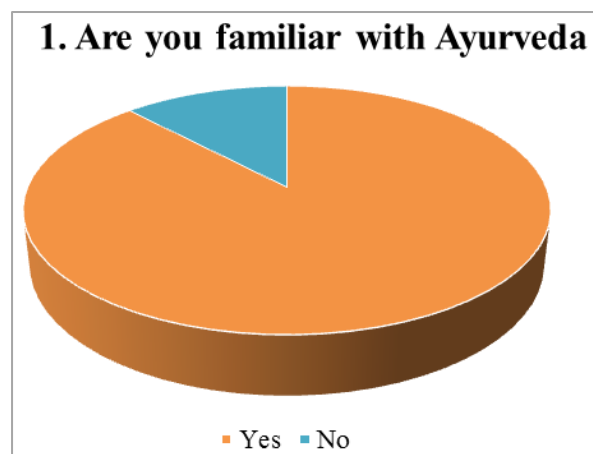


Figure 15. Familiarity with Ayurveda.

The above chart depicts that 87.9% of the respondents are familiar with Ayurveda, though 12.1% of the respondents were not.

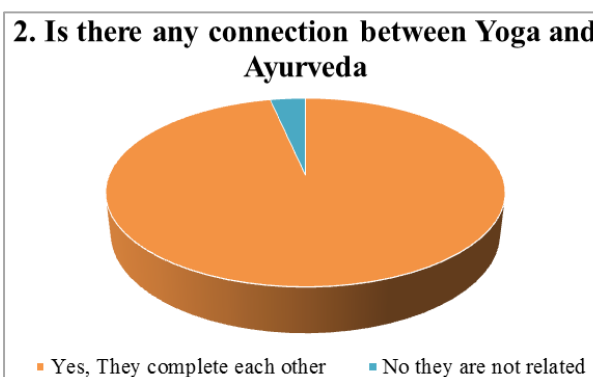


Figure 16. Connection between yoga and Ayurveda.

It is evident from the above chart that 97.2% of the respondents find the connection between yoga and Ayurveda as well as believe that they complete each other, whereas 2.8% of the respondents find that they are not related to each other.

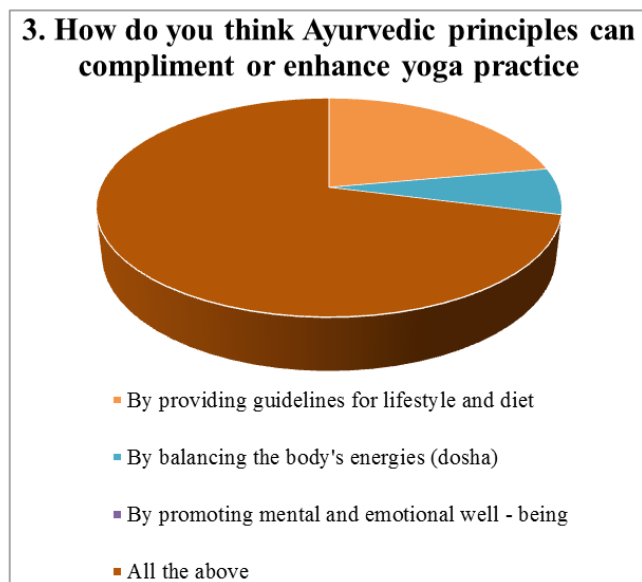


Figure 17. Correlation between Ayurvedic principles and yoga.

The above chart shows that 70.7% of the respondents believe that with all the factors mentioned above, Ayurvedic principles can compliment or enhance yoga practice, though 22.4% of the respondents believe that it can be done by providing guidelines for lifestyle and diet, whereas 6.6% of the respondents believe that it can be done by balancing the body's energies (doshas).

4. Conclusion

The silhouettes and designs of the garments worn by yoga practitioners were loin cloth or dhoti a type of draped garment since ancient times. The field of yoga has experienced significant growth, witnessing substantial developments in equipment, garments worn during the practice, and the overall culture associated with this ancient tradition [9]. In recent times, there has been a discernible surge of interest in yoga practitioners toward locally sourced and sustainably manufactured yoga apparel. Yogis have demonstrated a genuine concern that transcends mere surface-level attributes like style or color. Their focus extends to more profound considerations, such as the origins and safety of the products they incorporate into their practice [10]. Thus, while making garments for yoga practitioners the fabrics must be selected with all such considerations.

Author Contributions

Shruti Tiwari: Project administration, Supervision, Vali-

dation, Writing – review & editing

Shikha Kapoor: Conceptualization, Data curation, Writing – original draft

Amar Mithapalli: Formal Analysis, Methodology, Visualization

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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