



## Introduction

Millions of people suffer from depression and anxiety, making antidepressants the third most commonly prescribed drug, with continued increasing use over the past 20 years.<sup>1-3</sup> Yoga is a form of meditation and exercise that connects the mind and the body in a unique self-guided healing process. The use of Yoga has increased over the past 10 years.<sup>4</sup>

Studies have found benefits of Yoga for decreasing depression and anxiety.<sup>5,6</sup> Yoga Nidra is a specific practice of Yoga used to mentally scan the body to explore physical sensations and emotions, thus helping the person to become aware of symptoms that may be associated with good or ill feelings.<sup>7</sup>

For this project, we hypothesized that using Yoga Nidra exercises would improve symptoms associated with depression and anxiety symptoms in psychiatric patients.

This project was approved by the UNTHSC IRB (#2011-083) and John Peter Smith Health Network IRB (#060611.007ex).

## Materials and Methods

The study used a naturalistic clinical outcomes design. Study subjects were recruited by referral from a psychologist who recommends Yoga Nidra to her clients as part of her clinical practice. The diagnostic eligibility of MDD was verified in the record.

Enrolled subjects received a *LifeForce Yoga Nidra to Manage Your Mood* (permission received by author Amy Weintraub) CD or on an MP3 player with two different length Yoga Nidra instructions, one of 20 and one of 40 minutes in length.<sup>7</sup>

At enrollment to the study the subject were provided with instructions on the use of the Yoga Nidra exercises and the study log, to collect usage and opinion data.

We collected quality of life information using the SF-8 at baseline, the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) and the Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI) at each of three study visits.

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## Analysis and Results

The number of subjects in this study required a descriptive approach to the data analysis.

Twelve subjects completed this study. Ten subjects were female. Figure 1 illustrates the results of the baseline SF-8. Six individuals reported well below normal (2 standard deviations (SD)) perceptions of their own mental state. Two reported well below normal (2 SD) self perceived physical health status.

Figure 2 illustrates the change in the median BDI score (the point at which 50% of the subjects reported higher and 50% lower scores) from 30 to 16 at the third study visit, representing a change in level of depression from moderate depression to mild mood disturbance as defined by the BDI interpretive guidelines.<sup>8</sup>

Also we noted a decrease in anxiety reflected in Figure 3. Median BAI scores decreased from 27 to 13, representing a change in anxiety from moderate to very low.<sup>9</sup>

Most women ( $n=8$ ) used the 40 minute track, one woman used both tracks while both men used the 20 minute track.

## Discussion

Subjects were concerned about their mental health status as shown in the baseline quality of life measurements. Yoga Nidra use appears to have facilitated an improvement in self-reported depression and anxiety levels in these study subjects. Future studies should enroll more study subjects to follow over a longer time period. This would facilitate the collection of other data that might also be related to changes such as medication changes, life changes, or other stress-exposure or stress-management practices.

While we cannot determine if Yoga Nidra exercises were the only contributing factor to improved depression and anxiety over the course of the study, it appears to have been an effective intervention. According to the Yoga usage log, all subjects used the audio instructions at least once in between study visits, and no subjects attempted the practices without the instructions. Thus the Yoga Nidra users may have found the instructions useful to the practice.

Some study subjects may have used Yoga Nidra before the study began, and not all study visits were precisely at one-week intervals.

## Acknowledgments

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Figure 1.

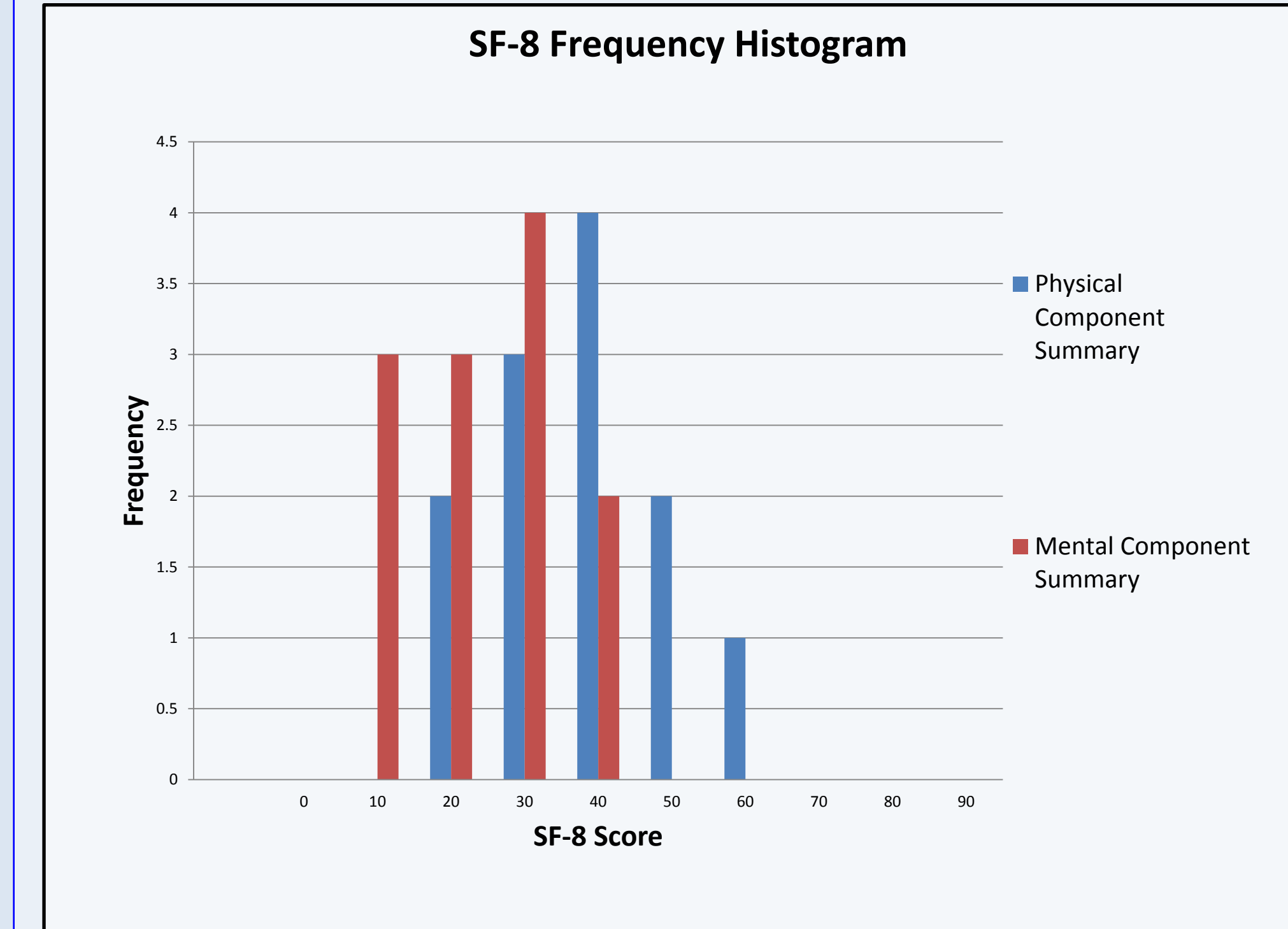


Figure 2.

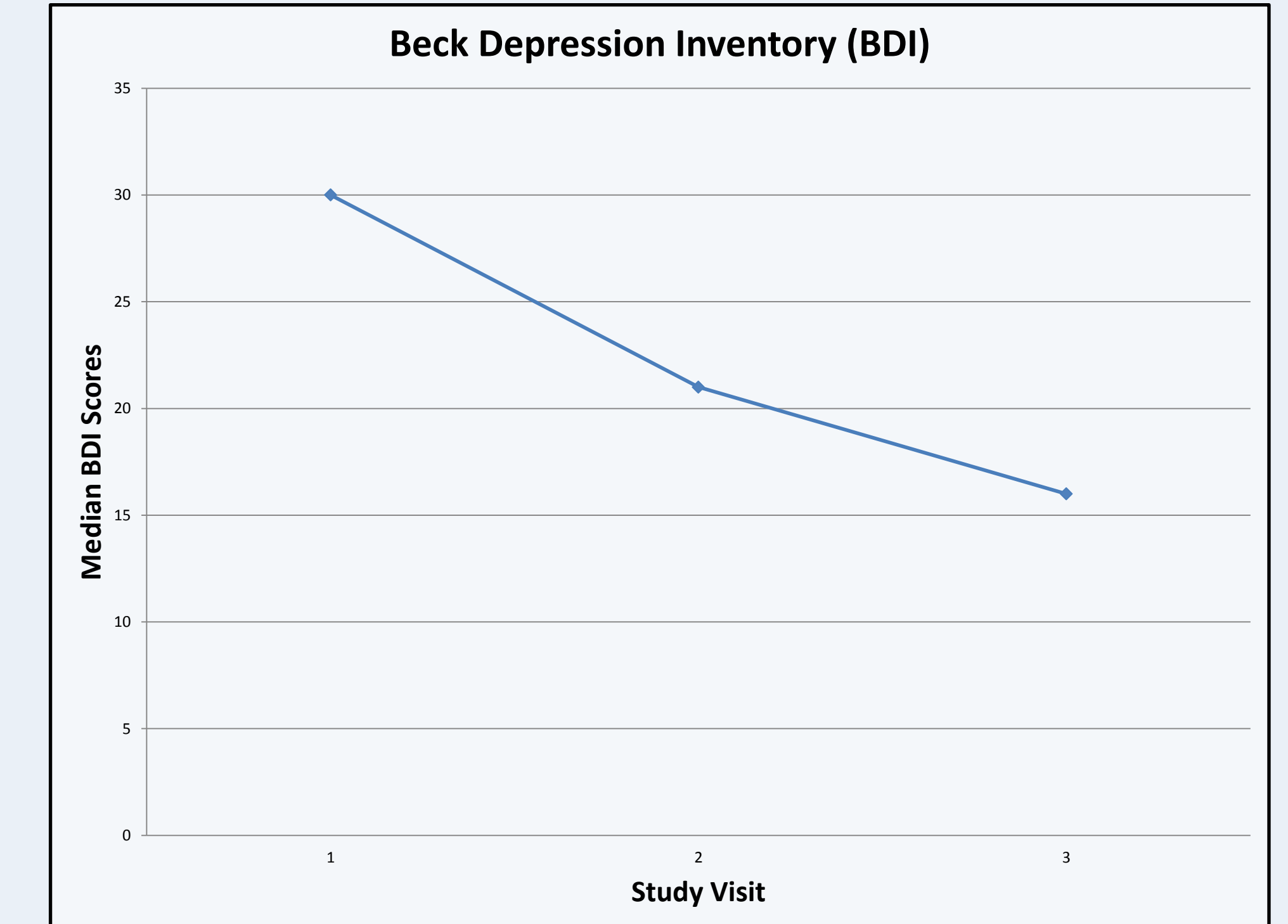
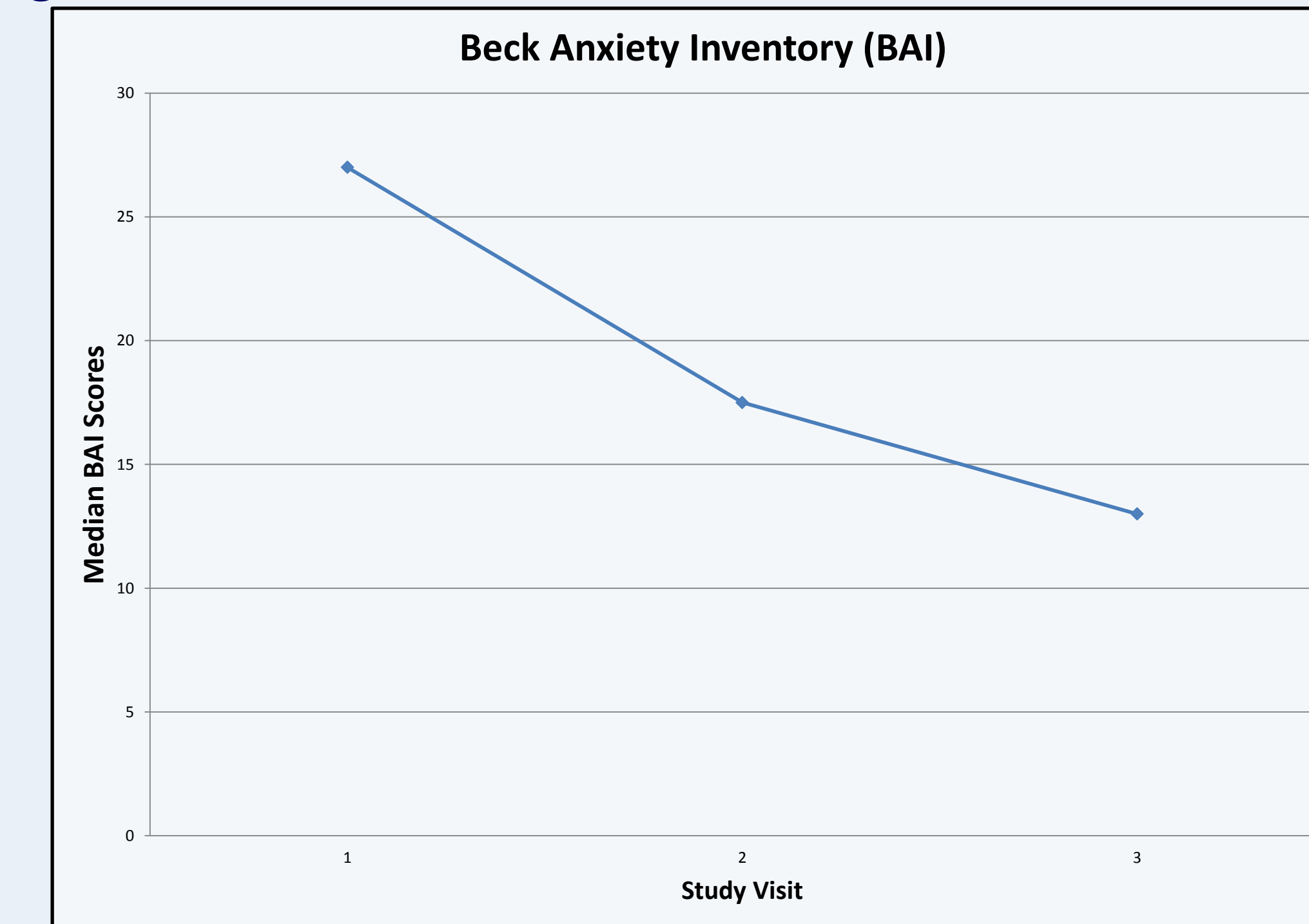


Figure 3.



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