

Recent Studies in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM)

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ABSTRACT

Chinese medicine has been in existence for thousands of years. Two tools in the toolkit of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) are tai chi and qigong. This paper summarizes some recent studies that have applied these tools to treat disease.

Keywords: Tai Chi; Qigong; Traditional Chinese Medicine; TCM

Introduction

Chinese medicine has been used to treat a wide range of ailments for thousands of years. In recent decades some of these traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) techniques have become more widely known as literature has been translated into English, practitioners have written books about it, and as the results of TCM studies have become more widely disseminated [1-81]. It is now even possible to learn qigong via instructional videos [82-88] or to take formal training online [89]. The next few paragraphs summarize some recent studies that have found qigong or tai chi to be effective in treating several different ailments.

Recent Studies

An umbrella review of the use of qigong to treat cancer found that qigong was a safe and effective method that can be used even on frail patients [90]. Quality of life, cognitive impairment and cancer-related fatigue were all improved using various qigong techniques. Different qigong programs had different impacts on gastrointestinal problems and sleep quality, leading to the belief that longer practice sessions might be required to achieve improvements. Regular practice was found to be required in order to prolong the benefits. Mind-body

therapies (MBTs), including tai chi and qigong as well as hypnosis, imagery and yoga were found to be effective in addressing a myriad of psychosocial and physical symptoms and biomarkers as well as immune function for people suffering from cancer [91]. Patients having multiple sclerosis also benefitted by incorporating qigong exercises into their medical regimen [92]. A study of the effects of exercise on sleep in perimenopausal women found that various kinds of exercise, including yoga, walking, fitness qigong and aerobics all had a beneficial effect, but qigong was the most effective technique when practiced for 10-12 weeks with a frequency of more than 3 times a week for a duration of 30-60 minutes [93]. A study of 15 randomized control trials from China, Thailand and the United States of older adults with cognitive impairment found that, compared with conventional therapy alone, traditional Chinese exercises improved global cognitive function significantly. The TCM methods used included tai chi, baduanjin and other forms of qigong [94].

In another study, qigong exercises were found to balance oxygen supply and acid-base to modulate hypoxia [95]. Adults having neuropathic pain with spinal cord injury with 6-12 weeks of Spring Forest Qigong practice found significant pain reduction. They also had greater ability to perform functional activities and had improved

mood [96]. A series of studies using tai chi, baduanjin or other forms of qigong found that patients with hypertension were able to reduce blood pressure [97]. The studies included in this paper were all reported in 2023. Numerous prior studies, some of which are listed in the reference section, reached similar results for a wide range of ailments. Tai chi and qigong, when practiced correctly, have no adverse side-effects, and have been shown to be effective in treating a wide range of ailments.

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Conflict of Interest

None.

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