

Using Alternative Medical Techniques to Lose Weight

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses alternative medical techniques used to lose weight. The techniques discussed are tai chi and qigong, two forms of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) that have been used for centuries to treat a wide range of ailments. The initial stage of this research used Microsoft Copilot, an artificial intelligence chatbot, to find publications on the use of these two tools of TCM to lose weight. The initial search uncovered several internet articles that discussed cases where tai chi or qigong were used successfully to reduce weight. Stage two of the search used PubMed, a medical database to find medical studies that examined the use of tai chi or qigong to lose weight. The study found that tai chi and qigong can be used to effect weight loss.

Keywords: Tai Chi; Qigong; Traditional Chinese Medicine; TCM; Yoga; Artificial Intelligence; Weight Loss; Obesity; Copilot

Introduction

Obesity has increased in recent years, for a variety of reasons. Diet and lack of exercise both contribute to it. Being overweight can result in health problems, even if the individual is merely overweight but not sufficiently overweight to be classified as obese. Those who are obese or overweight are at greater risk of developing cardiovascular diseases such as heart disease and stroke, as well as high blood pressure and high cholesterol [1,2]. Studies have found that there is a link between obesity and type 2 diabetes. High glucose levels can lead to severe complications of all sorts, including heart disease, kidney disease and even nerve damage [2,3]. The excessive cholesterol in the bile can lead to the formation of gall stones [1]. The extra weight can also have an adverse effect on hip and knee joints and can be a contributing factor to osteoarthritis [3]. Being overweight can also increase the risk of certain cancers due to hormonal imbalances and inflammation [3,4]. It can also lead to respiratory problems such as asthma and sleep apnea by restricting the airways and making breathing more difficult [1].

Being overweight can lead to or exacerbate depression and anxiety. There is also a social stigma that is associated with being overweight. All of these factors have a negative effect on mental well-being [1,2]. The usual ways to achieve weight loss include diet, exercise and perhaps medication. In this article we will explore other ways to lose

weight, methods that do not include medication or changes in diet, although a change in diet is often recommended when one wants to achieve weight loss. Tai chi and qigong are two kinds of light, low (or no) impact exercises that have been used for centuries to treat and even cure a wide range of ailments by strengthening the body's natural immune system. They have been popular remedies in Asia for centuries, and their use has been used increasingly in recent decades in the West [5-40]. They are considered part of what may be called Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM).

The Study

The first step in the current study is to utilize artificial intelligence (AI) to see what information is available on the internet. AI does not take the place of rigorous medical research, but it can be a good way to learn what is easily retrievable on the internet. AI is being used increasingly in medical research and practice, and its use is expected to increase dramatically in the future [41-70]. However, there are at least two caveats that must be mentioned if one wants to use AI in any kind of research. Prior studies have found that the information retrieved using AI can be inaccurate [71-75] or even biased [76-84]. Thus, caution must be used, and it is necessary to check the accuracy of any information retrieved. If one requires more detailed or technical information, the next step would be to access one or more medical databases. We will use Microsoft Copilot [85] in the present study

because, as of this writing, it is one of the better chatbots. It is easy to use, the information it provides is often good, at least as a starting point, and there is a free version, which often provides sufficient information to satisfy the needs of most scholars who want to find basic information on the targeted topic. The first step is to give it a command or instruction or ask it a question on the topic to be researched. It must be formulated in a way that will enable it to retrieve the needed information without also providing information that is not relevant to the study. If the information provided on the initial inquiry is unsatisfactory, all that need be done is to fine-tune the request or ask a different question. The first instruction might go something like this if the goal is to find articles and/or studies on the use of tai chi or qigong to lose weight.

Instruction

Has tai chi or qigong been found to be effective in weight loss? Provide summaries of relevant studies and give citations.

Copilot Reply

Yes, both tai chi and qigong have been found to be effective in promoting weight loss. Here are summaries of some relevant studies:

1) Tai Chi and Weight Loss:

- a) A study tracked a group of adults practicing tai chi five times a week for 45 minutes each session over 12 weeks. The participants lost a little over a pound without making any additional lifestyle changes [86].
- b) Another study compared tai chi with low-impact exercise and a no-exercise group. The results showed that tai chi was as effective as low-impact exercise in reducing weight and waist circumference [87].

2) Qigong and Weight Loss:

- a) While specific studies on qigong and weight loss are less common, qigong shares many similarities with tai chi in terms of low-impact, mindful movement. These practices can help increase caloric expenditure and improve overall metabolism [88]. Both tai chi and qigong are particularly beneficial for individuals who may find high-impact exercises challenging due to health conditions or mobility issues. They also offer additional health benefits such as stress reduction, improved cardiovascular health, and better overall well-being [88-90].

Author Comments

Copilot provided several good examples of studies that found either tai chi or qigong to be effective in weight loss. Readers who are interested in learning more can refer to the publications cited.

Sauer [86] listed 11 ways that tai chi can benefit health. They are:

1) Stress reduction: She cited a study [91] that compared the effectiveness of tai chi and traditional exercise to stress reduction. That study concluded that tai chi may be superior to other forms of exercise for reducing stress and anxiety.

2) Improved mood: She cited a study [92] that found that qigong and tai chi reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety, much like mindfulness meditation.

3) Better sleep: She cited two studies. One study [93] of young adults found that those who practiced tai chi twice a week for 10 weeks had a better quality of sleep and experienced less anxiety than those in the control group. The other study [94] found that practicing tai chi twice a week for two months resulted in a better quality of sleep for adults who had cognitive impairment.

4) Weight loss: She cited a study [95] that found that adults who practiced tai chi for 45 minutes, five times a week for 12 weeks lost a little over one pound, which is not much, but it is something.

5) Improved cognition in older adults: She cited a study [96] that found that tai chi improved cognition and plasma BDNF in older adults with mild cognitive impairment.

6) Reduced risk of falling in older adults: She cited two studies that reached this conclusion [97-98].

7) Improved fibromyalgia symptoms: She cited a 2018 study that had this finding [99].

8) Improved COPD symptoms: She cited a 2014 study [100] that found this result.

9) Improved balance and strength for people suffering from Parkinson's disease: She cited a study [101] of 195 patients who decreased the number of falls by practicing tai chi regularly.

10) Coronary heart disease.

11) Reduced arthritis pain: She cited several studies where tai chi was found to reduce arthritis pain [102-104].

A search of one or more medical databases such as PubMed [105] would find additional studies on the beneficial weight loss effects of tai chi or qigong. A search using tai chi and weight loss as key words found four relevant studies [106-109]. A search for qigong and weight loss found an additional relevant study [110].

Concluding Comments

Several studies have found that both tai chi and qigong can be used to achieve weight loss. They are good alternatives to some traditional Western methods that use medications or surgery to achieve the same goal.

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