



Tai Chi & Older Adults: Evaluation of the Evidence & Rigor of the Research

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Purpose of Tai Chi Study

- Evaluate evidence of the benefits of Tai Chi for older adults
- Evaluate rigor of Tai Chi research
- Improve ability to critique research studies
- Learn issues and considerations for research design and study

Tai Chi is a traditional Chinese martial art that combines meditation and gentle physical exercise



Photo credit: Saul Krotki

Health Benefits of Tai Chi

(Wang, Arch Intern Med 2004)



Photo credit: Saul Krotki

- ↓ stress & anxiety
- ↓ fall risk
- ↓ hypertension
- ↑ immune function
- ↑ cardio-respiratory function
- ↑ muscular-skeletal function
- ↑ balance

Characteristics of the best studies

- Tai Chi interventions lasted 50 minutes, 3 times week for at least six months
- Used expert instructors who were more likely to stay “true” to classic principles of Tai Chi form
- Controlled for exercise, social interaction & patient education
- Combined objective standardized measures and self reports
- Reported positive and negative findings

Research Recommendations

- Do follow up studies to determine if effects of Tai Chi are lasting.
- Conduct more studies on Tai Chi students who regularly practice
- Study cognitive function after Tai Chi (clarity of thought, problem solving ability)
- Study the meditation aspect of Tai Chi
- Determine key principles regardless of which style of Tai Chi used (ex. Body alignment or total weight shifting)

Clinical Application



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