Tai Chi for Health

Rey Ximenes MD, DABA, FIPP, DABAM, FAAMA, CTN
Consulting Physician- Balcones Pain Consultants
5200-B Davis Lane
Austin, TX 78749
rximenes@balconespain.com

Medical Director- Driftwood Recovery
1905 Elder Hill Road
Driftwood, TX 78619
rximenes@driftwoodrecovery.com
What is Tai Chi?
Qigong

- Literally means mastering the energy of life, so Tai Chi is a form of Qigong
- Qigong involves coordinated movement, breath, and awareness used for health, meditation, and martial arts training
- Nowadays is thought of as a more static form, with Tai Chi having more leg movements
- Focus of qigong is typically more on health or meditation than martial applications
- Some would say the breathing technique is different but different techniques can be used in both depending on what you are trying to achieve
- I think of them as the same
**t’ai chi ch’üan**

- “Supreme Ultimate Fist”
- An internal Chinese martial art usually practiced for self-defense and health, but also done for:
  - Wrestling/push hands (tui shou)
  - Demonstrations/Competitions
  - Achieving Longevity
  - Meditation in Motion
Tai Chi

- A Taoist/Confucian philosophy representing the fusion of Yin and Yang as the Tai Chi, the supreme ultimate.

- Philosophy is not to directly fight or resist an incoming force, but to meet it with softness and “stick to it” or follow its motion while remaining in physical contact until the incoming force of attack exhausts itself or can be safely redirected, meeting *yang* with *yin*.

- “The green bamboo reed which bends in the wind is stronger than the mighty oak which breaks in the storm.” - Confucius
Tai Chi

- The forms that are done are forms from martial arts
- They are done slowly to develop the correct motions and flows, thus “muscle memory”
- Often include weapons and 2 person forms but here we will look at solo forms
- The slowness of the motion and the integrated breathing promotes autonomic balance, better balance, and strength
Historical Perspective

- For the most part, legend
- Many traditional schools feel there is a connection to and dependence upon the theories of Song Dynasty Neo-Confucianism (a conscious synthesis of Taoist, Buddhist, and Confucian traditions, especially the teachings of Mencius)
Some feel the theories and practice were formulated by the Taoist monk Zhang Sanfeng in the 12th century, at about the same time that the principles of the Neo-Confucian school were making themselves felt in Chinese intellectual life. This has been disputed.

We do know Yang Luchan trained with the Chen family for 18 years before he started to teach the art in Beijing, which strongly suggests that his art was based on, or heavily influenced by, the Chen family art. The Chen family are able to trace the development of their art back to Chen Wangting in the 17th century.
All forms trace back to five schools

- **Yang Style** of Yang Luchan (1799–1872)
- **Chen Style** of Chen Wangting (1580–1660)
- **Wu Style** of Wu Chuan-Yu (1834–1902) and his son Wu Chien Chuan (1870–1942)
- **Wu (Hao)** of Wu Yu-Hsiang (1812–1880)
- **Sun Style** of Sun Lu-Tang (1861–1932)

But all schools trace back to the Chen Village
Yang Style

- Attributed to Yang Chenfu (1883–1936)
- Historically considered the best known teacher of the soft style Tai Chi Chuan
- Was among the first teachers to offer Tai Chi Chuan instruction to the general public at the Beijing Physical Culture Research Institute from 1914 until 1928
- He is known for having "smoothed" out the somewhat more vigorous training routine he learned from his family as well as emphasizing a "large frame" or "Da Jia" with expansive movements in stepping and using large circular motions with the arms
- His form has become the standard for Yang styles
The 10 Principles

▪ Head Upright, Spirit Rising
▪ Sink the Chest, Raise the Back.
▪ Loosen the Waist
▪ Differentiate Between Empty and Solid.
▪ Sink the Shoulders, Drop the Elbows
▪ Use Will, Not Strength
▪ Coordinate Top and Bottom
▪ Harmonize Internal and External.
▪ Move with Continuity.
▪ Seek Stillness in the Movement.
Health Aspects

- The ancient Chinese practice has been linked to a myriad health benefits, from improved immunity, lowered blood pressure, stress reduction, to reduced inflammation. Now, a new review of research says it may help older people avoid dangerous falls, as well. Published in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*, the review analyzed results from 10 randomized controlled studies that looked at potential ways to reduce the risk of falling in adults who were older or disabled in some way. After reviewing these studies, researchers from the University of Jaén in Spain concluded that there was “high-quality evidence” that Tai Chi reduced the rate of falls by 43% within the first year of learning the practice—and an additional 13% after the first year—compared to other interventions.
Health Aspects

- Tai Chi chosen as one of Harvard’s Top 5 Essential Exercises
- Tai Chi has been reported as being useful in treating osteoporosis
- Tai Chi Significantly Reduces Symptoms Of Depression - Massachusetts General Hospital
- In 2013, the total cost of fall injuries was $34 billion. The financial toll for older adult falls is expected to increase as the population ages and may reach $67.7 billion by 2020. -- National Council on Aging
- BBC reports Tai Chi can help people with heart failure.
- Tai Chi can address 60 to 90% of all the illnesses sending people to our doctors - Dr. Herbert Benson of Harvard, author of "The Relaxation Response,"
References

- The Essence and Applications of Taijiquan, Yang Chenfu
- On Tai Chi Chuan, T.Y. Pang
- The Harvard Medical School Guide to Tai Chi, Peter Wayne, PhD/Mark L. Fuerst
- The Complete Idiot’s Guide to Tai Chi and Qigong, Bill Douglas and Angela WongDouglas
- The Tao of Tai Chi, Bill Douglas
- http://flowingzen/11810/tai-chi-students-don’t-make-these-10-mistakes/
- www.worldtaichiday.org
- http://www.longevitylive.com/health-living/fitness/5-best-exercises-healthy-body/
- https://www.studyfinds.org/tai-chi-depression-study/
- -- Medical News Today, July 27th, 2017
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q5PH_dt58i0&feature=youtu.be
- http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/3728174.stm
- http://www.worldtaichiday.org/WTCQDHlthBenft.html
To the mind that is still,

the whole universe surrenders.

-- Lao Tzu