

Tai chi and Qigong Improve Cognitive and Physical Function

Full Summary:

Cognitive decline and Alzheimer's disease are serious concerns for older adults. These conditions contribute to a reduced quality of life, and increased caregiver burden and health care costs. A strong research meta-analysis of seventeen separate studies found that tai chi and qigong improved memory, attention, language fluency and physical function. Studies with tai chi and qigong for three months or less had similar significant effects as studies up to a year in duration. As tai chi and qigong had both cognitive and physical benefits, the researchers were able to isolate the significant unique effects on cognitive function that also did not vary by duration of tai chi and qigong practice.

Although one strong research study can provide useful findings, this study is notable because it used meta-analysis to pool the effects of seventeen high quality studies. Unlike previous meta-analysis, the researchers searched thirteen English, Korean and Chinese databases. From 20,292 studies, they removed duplicate studies, those of poor quality and those not meeting selection criteria. The studies included in the meta-analysis had a total of 2,365 subjects with a mean age of 70 years and nearly all living in the community. The large number of studies in the analysis allowed the researchers to use a technique to isolate the cognitive effects of tai chi and qigong from changes in physical function.

The investigators postulated that remembering the sequence and form of movements and the meditative aspects of tai chi and qigong may account for significant effects on cognition irrespective of the physical benefits.

Park, M. et al. (2023). Effects of tai chi and qigong on cognitive and physical functions in older adults: Systematic review, meta-analysis, and meta-regression of randomized clinical trials. *BMC Geriatrics*, 23, 352-368.

https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10242998/pdf/12877_2023_Article_4070.pdf

–summarized by Beverly Roberts, 10/23