

2014 International Tai Chi Symposium was a success

July 19, 2014

3:51 PM MST

After two years of planning and 80 volunteers' hard work, the weeklong 2014 International [Tai Chi](#) (Taiji) Symposium concluded successfully on July 11, 2014 in Louisville, KY. In the closing remarks, Grandmaster Chen Zhenglei summarized this symposium with three words: harmony, excitement, and gratitude.



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Opening Ceremony

Violet Li



Ping Li

The theme of 2014 Tai Chi Symposium was “Directly from the Source” that brought together the wisdom of Tai Chi Chuan with the precision of modern science through master’s workshops and evidence-based literary review sessions. Grandmasters Chen Zhenglei, Yang Jun, Zhong Zhenshan, Ma Hailong, Sun Yongtian, and He Youlu are the lineage holders of Chen, Yang, Wu/Hao, Wu, and Sun style respectively; they came from China to attend this event with the exception of Grandmaster Yang Jun who lives in Bothell, WA with his family. Professor Kang Gewu, Secretary General Wushu ([Martial Arts](#)) Research Institute of the General Administration of Sport of China, made a special trip from Beijing to observe the event and deliver an important remark on Tai Chi theory. Science and medical professionals Karen Grantz, Ph.D (US), Daniel Shulz, Ph.D (France), Ramon Suarez Zaldu, MD (Uruguay), Kristi Hallisy (US), Patricia Corrigan Culotti (US), Tricia Yu (US), Chris Bouguyon (US), Rod Ferguson (Australia), Kristina Woodworth (US), and Patricia Flatt, Ph.D (US) presented medical research results, medical reviews, and evidence from practicum. Tai Chi master and Taoist monk Arthur Rosenfeld (US) was a keynote speaker and brought lucidity of the art of Tai Chi Chuan. According to Arthur, Tai Chi Chuan is a fractal with refined Chinese martial arts, Traditional Chinese Medicine, and Taoist philosophy as the three legs of a tripod. Tai Chi is not just a powerful martial art on battlefield; it also provides the spiritual enlightenment helping us to battle through life.

During the symposium, each of the grandmasters presented a keynote address as well as taught ten movements of his Tai Chi styles. Grandmaster Zhong shared the history of Wu/Hao Tai Chi Style, his personal experience from practicing the art, and the training process. Grandmaster Chen’s speech on the body requirements of Chen Style Tai Chi was content rich both in theory and techniques, of which most are applicable to other Tai Chi styles. As a grandson of Wu Style Tai Chi creator and trained

medical professional, Grandmaster Ma shared the fundamentals of Wu Style Tai Chi and explained some of Tai Chi health benefits from a Western medicine perspective. Grandmaster Sun introduced Sun Style Tai Chi's features and how Tai Chi can impact people's lives. Since He Style Tai Chi is relatively unknown outside of China. Grandmaster He shared the history and characteristics of it. Grandmaster Yang's speech was well organized as he outlined how all Tai Chi styles derived from the Chen style and how Yang Style transformed through generations. He further explained the Yin/Yang theory in Tai Chi Chuan. In general there are commonalities among all styles: Tai Chi Chuan is a product of Chinese culture and heavily influenced by Chinese philosophy, it is a martial art as well as a healing art, and it must be practiced in a relaxed and focused mode. The content of each speech will be reported in details separately later at this column <http://www.examiner.com/tai-chi-in-national/violet-li>.

The science program focused on Tai Chi's impact on the brain and neurology. Since Tai Chi Chuan is a holistic exercise regimen, the health benefits presented were limited to the area of neuroscience and cognition. Below is a brief summary of the science sessions:

- Dr. Daniel Shulz introduced the fact that due to brain plasticity, the brain changes structurally and through learning and practice can improve the adaption in the brain; in other words by practicing more, one can increase his Tai Chi skills.
- Dr. Karen Grantz shared the growing research in the area of emotional resiliency and how Tai Chi practice can help people to obtain emotional balance and positive perspective toward life. She further reported how and why Tai Chi Chuan could assist trauma survivors and patients with Post Dramatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) deal with unwanted traumatic remembering, undesirable automatic physical arousal and activation, unhealthy avoidance thinking and behavior, and emotional and physical numbing.
- Dr. Ramon Zaldu from the National Institute of Rheumatology of Uruguay presented a study of "Physical and Mental Effect of Tai Chi Chuan in Chronic Diseases: Research Evidence, Clinical Experience, and Patient Perception," which shows Tai Chi Chuan can be used in chronic diseases treatments as an intervention to improve physical and mental aspects of patients, generating a better perception of quality of life.
- Dr. Kristi Hallisy who specializes in physical therapy, stated that a study showed patients had increased in weight-bearing tolerance, single-leg standing balance, leg strength, and weight transfers, and decrease in pain ratings after using Tai Chi Chuan as a meditative movement therapy for the management of persistent musculoskeletal pains that affects the muscles, ligaments, tendons, and bones. Dr. Hallisy explained it was because Tai Chi Chuan practice encompasses exercises that promotes posture,

flexibility, and mental concentration, is done in slow and controlled fashion, and is safe for patients with chronic health conditions to perform.

- Patricia Corrigan Culotti and Tricia Yu presented “Tai Chi Fundamentals for Veterans and VA Staff across the Health Care Continuum: From Rehabilitation to Wellness.” Many veterans suffer from PolyTrauma or a combination of various pains, balance, memory functions, concentration/attention, sleep quality, emotional/mental issues, stress management, and social reintegration. Tai Chi has been found to be beneficial for many of these problems. Therefore, the Milwaukee VA has a grant for Tai Chi Fundamentals to train VA medical staff so they can teach veterans Tai Chi since 2012 and the outcome so far has proven to be very helpful especially with veterans suffering from Parkinson’s Disease. (Note: Tai Chi Fundamentals is a simplified Cheng Man-Ching Style Tai Chi <http://www.taichihealth.com>.)
- Chris Bouguyon is the Director of SimplyAware and the Training Mindfully with Qigong Principles program was designed to include eight Qigong principles (grounding energy, rising energy, minding the breath, expanding/absorbing, exploring Yin and Yang, sinking energy, listening energy, and smiling energy) to help veterans to redefine their physical, mental, and emotional well being, and most importantly to integrate changes into their lives.
- Rod Ferguson of the Australian Academy of Tai Chi & Qigong shared a success story of a community-based Tai Chi program to reduce risk factors for chronic heart failure patients. Rod explained that Tai Chi helps patients with blood circulation, muscle toning, blood pressure normalizing, stress reduction, and breathing so it is useful for people who have chronic heart problems or are recovering from a heart attack.
- Kristina Woodworth reviewed the evidence of using Tai Chi as an intervention for neurologic diseases, e.g. Parkinson’s Disease (PD) and Multiple Sclerosis (MS) by citing various studies. In conclusion, Tai Chi Chuan is a safe and possibly effective intervention to complement standard treatments for PD and MS. Tai Chi can improve mobility, balance, and mood. But more large-scale, well-controlled, robust studies are needed.
- Dr. Patricia Flatt adopted Harvard Medical School’s Dr. Peter Wayne’s eight ingredients of Tai Chi for her study, which are awareness/mindfulness/focused attention, intention/belief/expectation, dynamic structural integration, active relaxation of mind and body, aerobic exercise/musculoskeletal strengthening/flexibility, natural and freer breathing, social interaction and community, and embodied spirituality, philosophy and ritual. She then applied the methodology of Meta-Analysis to contrast and combine

results from hundreds of research studies and found out that due to short duration of the studies and small sample size, most studies did not generate statistically significant outcomes. But overall, the Meta-Analysis still shows positive trends that Tai Chi can be an effective therapy to improve PD or MS patients' conditions.

- There was one panel discussion between Grandmasters and science professionals with audience participation allowed. Three main topics about mind (focus), Yi (intent), and Jing (internal energy) were examined. At the end Professor Kang Gewu was requested to comment. He indicated that he was very excited to witness that participants' level of Tai Chi was high and their questions were deep and beyond physical movement. He elucidated that the Yin/Yang theory is the foundation of Tai Chi Chuan. He encouraged practitioners to focus on Yin/Yang when practicing Tai Chi. Once internalized this concept, it will bring a balanced outlook for them toward life. He pointed out that in Chinese language that the heart, or Xin, actually means thinking or thoughts. We should use the Xin to guide the intent, or Yi. With practice, Xin and Yi will become one. Kang distinguished Li (or force) and Jin (or internal energy) by pointing out that Li is brute force while Jin is strength or internal energy obtained through training by following rules. Jin has direction, different levels of strength, and distance (long, short, or spiraling).

The symposium had a very tight schedule; activities started early in the morning until night almost everyday. In the morning, there was Sunrise practice led by Grandmasters. Monday night, there was a formal banquet, Kentucky congressmen, Louisville Mayor, and Principle of Spalding University all participated. Grandmasters were given the honor of "Kentucky Colonel", the highest honor that the State presents to presidents, celebrities, and dignitaries. Thursday night, Grandmasters and their disciples performed in the grand showcase.

Tai Chi Chuan emphasizes the harmony between people and nature as well as harmony among people. Grandmaster Chen stated that the success of this symposium signified the harmony among various styles and the harmony between Tai Chi Chuan and science. Chen also expressed his excitement to see how Tai Chi and science come together and the enthusiasm to promote Tai Chi among the international Tai Chi community as well as the science industry. The State of Kentucky bestowed the "Kentucky Colonel" Award to the grandmasters for their contribution to promote Tai Chi and health. Chen attributed this honor to the attractiveness of Tai Chi. Finally, he appreciated Grandmaster Yang Jun for his leadership and vision, the Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan Association for organizing the event, the State of Kentucky, the City of Louisville, Spalding University, Mohammad Ali Center, volunteers, grandmasters, and experts to support this symposium.

Among the 261 participants from 13 different countries, approximately 15 percent were instructors and many with ten, twenty, or thirty years of experience. Almost all participants that I interviewed expressed their gratitude for the opportunity to learn from the grandmasters and scientists. Some of them could not believe how accessible the grandmasters were. Few students said that grandmasters did not mind to be asked questions during various social occasions. The symposium attendees also enjoyed meeting other Tai Chi enthusiasts, building relationship, and exchanging knowledge and experience.

Grandmaster Yang presented the President's Award of Recognition to a team of international volunteers which comprised of Holly Sweeney-Hillman (Director of Academics), Lloyd Kelly (Director of Communications), Carl Meeks (Vice-President / Director of Logistics), Carolyn Fung (Editor of the Newsletter), Audi Peal (Legal Advisor), Ray Tom (President's Assistant), Lisa Nutt (Secretary), Sue Arione (Accounting), Sergio Arione (Fundraising), Pat Rice (Program Director), Pam Boyde (Staffing Director), Mike Lucero (Webmaster), and Marco Gagnon (Graphic Arts) for their dedication. Symposium participants also recognized Mrs. Fong Hong, Grandmaster Yang Jun's wife, for her role as the chief financial officer for the event. All attendees enjoyed Bill Walsh's role as the MC for the symposium.

NOTE: use this link to see over 800 unedited event photos

<http://s1295.photobucket.com/user/scotchvee/library/>

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- **Master Yang Jun accepted his first disciples**
- **Chen Wangting and Hsieh Tong-liang**



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