

A Comprehensive Review of Health Benefits of Qigong and Tai Chi

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Dr. Roger Jahnke
(courtesy of Dr. Jahnke)

In the latest July/August Issue of the Science of Health Promotion, Dr. Roger Jahnke, Linda Larkey, Ph. D, Carol Rogers, Ph. D, Jennifer Etnier, Ph.D, and Fang Lin, MS present *A Comprehensive Review of Health Benefits of Qigong and Tai Chi*. This represents a monumental accomplishment in Tai Chi and Qigong research. Its publication has received attention from Web MD, ABC News, Medical News Today, and many online blog sites.

[The American Journal of Health Promotion](#) was launched in 1986 as the first peer reviewed journal devoted to health promotion and it remains the largest, with paid subscribers in all 50 States and about 40 other countries. It is a highly respected journal and authority in promoting health. Its editorial goal is to provide a forum for the many diverse disciplines that contribute to promoting health and to reduce the gap between health promotion research and practice.

[Roger Jahnke](#), O.M.D. is a doctor of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and has made eight research trips to China to study its theory and practice. He has thirty years of clinical practice of TCM. He is director of the Institute of Integral Qigong and Tai Chi (IIQTC) in Santa Barbara, California, and a co-founder of the National Qigong Association. He has served as a consultant to hospitals, social service

agencies, and corporations in Complementary and Integrative Medicine (CAM/ IM), wellness, and medical cost reduction. Dr. Jahnke is the author of *The Healer Within* (Harper, San Francisco, 1999) and *The Healing Promise of Qi* (McGraw-Hill, 2002) and several research papers. He is also a master teacher of Tai Chi and Qigong and has trained thousands of practitioners and instructors in the U.S. and 13 other countries.

Dr. Linda Larkey, Ph.D, CRTT and Scottsdale Healthcare Professor of Biobehavioral Oncology Research at Arizona State University, has been a principal investigator for several National Institute of Health (NIH)-sponsored research projects on promoting colorectal cancer prevention, and Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM).

Carol Rogers, APRN-BC, CNOR, Ph. D, has been a nurse for a long time and earned a Ph.D in nursing. She is currently with Arizona University and one of the 2009-2011 Claire M. Fagin Fellows as well as a Hartford Center of Geriatric Nursing Excellence Post-Doctoral Fellow.

Jennifer Etnier is an associate professor of sport and exercise psychology at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Her primary research focus is in the area of physical activity and cognition. In particular, Dr. Etnier is interested in the potential benefits of physical activity for the slowing of age-related cognitive decline and for the prevention of dementia.

The review team spent two years searching in various databases and ploughing through thousands of search results. To make the review significant, they adopted four important criteria for the review inclusion 1. Published in a peer-reviewed English-language journal between 1993 and December 2007; 2. Cited in nursing, medical or psychological literature; 3. Designed to test the effects of Tai Chi or Qigong; 4. Used a design of randomized controlled trials (RCTs) with a comparison to a control group. 576 articles made the first cut to be considered for inclusion. On a closer independent evaluation by three authors, only 77 articles or 67 unique studies met all four criteria for final review. There were 6,410 participants in those chosen studies which were conducted in 13 different countries. Those studies encompass 163 different physiological and psychological health outcomes. The review team grouped the health outcomes into nine categories: bone density, cardiopulmonary effects, physical function, falls/balance, quality of life, self-efficacy, patient reported outcomes, psychological symptoms, and immune and inflammation-related responses. Within each category, both Qigong and Tai Chi interventions were utilized.

The review effort was thorough. The team tabulated attributes of each study as source/researcher, subject/participant (number, gender, description, and mean age), exercise/intervention duration (minutes/per session, number of sessions/per week, and number of weeks), exercise type (selected Tai Chi style or Qigong style), control group, and reported outcomes. They did analysis and summarized any significant health benefits from Tai Chi and/or Qigong intervention for each benefit category. Furthermore, they explored the causes why some of the research did not generate expected results

and they found out that either the intervention was too short (eight weeks or less) or compromised health conditions of the participants.

Qigong has a long history of over four thousand years and there are thousands of different forms of Qigong exercise and Tai Chi is one kind of Qigong form. Unlike most of Qigong forms, Tai Chi is highly choreographed and difficult to learn in a short period. All the Tai Chi forms used in the medical studies are simplified Tai Chi forms (i.e. [Tai Chi Easy](#), Tai Chi Chih, [Tai Chi for arthritis](#), simplified Chen Style, or Yang Style Eight form) with simple movements and many repetitions. Both simplified Tai Chi and Qigong are focusing on the body form, breathing, and being conscious.

From the review, the authors conclude that research in RCTs has demonstrated consistent, significant results for a number of health benefits: positive effects on bone health, favorable cardiovascular and/or pulmonary outcomes, positive physical function improvements, significant improvement of fall prevention, improving quality of life for healthy or chronically ill patients, better pain management for arthritis and fibromyalgia patients, decreasing in anxiety, and immune system betterment. There is evidence to recognize the similarity and equivalence of Qigong and Tai Chi, especially in the simplified Tai Chi forms. Additionally, the research asserts that it does not matter whether Tai Chi or Qigong was used as the intervention method; the health benefits are similar.

From the rigorous work that the review team conducted, the result is robust and of a high standard. It definitely establishes a milestone for the medical research of Tai Chi and Qigong. What is most remarkable is that there was no extra funding for this research. The entire team volunteered and collaborated with each other and completed this monumental work. Due to the tremendous feedback the review has received from the medical industry, lead researcher Dr. Roger Jahnke announces that the team will continue with their work to conduct peer review of research studies published in 2008, 2009, and 2010.

For More Information: see the [latest issue Qi Dao eNewsletter](#) for more details.



Violet Li

Tai Chi Examiner