

## **Emerging Research Supporting Health Benefits of Qigong Exercise and Tai Chi practiced as Qigong: 2010 through 2014. A Bibliography.**

Report from the NQA Research & Education Committee

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### **Introduction**

Often times, qigong instructors and practitioners are asked to provide research evidence supporting practice claims. As recently as 15 years ago, a lack of high-quality research validating the benefits of qigong exercise and tai chi performed as qigong was a primary barrier to achieving a goal of recognition of the value of these practices within health promotion and traditional Western health care. Awareness of the potential benefits of qigong exercise was stimulated in 2004 when Klein and Adams<sup>1</sup> authored a review of the literature citing 17 research studies. The authors concluded that in 2004, preliminary research on implementation feasibility of Taiji (tai chi) programming existed for a variety of clinical populations. Over the next five years (2004-2009), through a growing awareness of the need for controlled research methodology and an expanding availability of research funding, the body of evidence strengthened. Practice validation was further advanced in 2010 when Jahnke et al<sup>2</sup> published a review of 77 clinical research articles investigating qigong exercise and tai chi concluding that consistent, significant results for a number of health benefits were confirmed through independent, quality research. These researchers also established the equivalency of therapeutic tai chi as qigong exercise. However at that time, many questions of efficacy still remained unanswered, and many clinical areas were as yet unexplored.

Since 2010, in response to the growing interest among qigong practitioners, the public and traditional health care providers, programming planners and economists, there has been an exponential growth of dedicated research into practice validation with added emphasis on mechanism of action. While exciting and potentially informative, the extent of this growing body of research has actually become somewhat overwhelming to the task for most general practitioners. Challenges include continuously monitoring reports as published, discerning the quality of research, weighing conclusions of conflicting reports, and projecting clinical implications. The following bibliographic report, generated by a subcommittee of the National Qigong Association (NQA) Research and Education Committee (R&E), provides quick access to key research that has emerged subsequent to the Jahnke et al review of 2010. This report is the first in a series of continuing 'Research Focus Reports' intended (a) to support and guide current and future Qigong exercise practice, (b) to serve as a resource for informing the public and clients, and (c) to garner support among policy makers to promote and fund future programming.

### **Methods**

A subcommittee, consisting of two members of the R&E Committee, volunteered to review the literature published from 2010 through the end of 2014 on the PubMed database. Two searches were performed. Both search included the key words *qigong*, *tai chi*, *t'ai chi*, and *taiji*. Filters included *humans* and *years*: 2010 through 2014. Selection filters for the first search also included the study type: *clinical research*. Inclusion criteria were (a) randomized research, and (b) significant evidence of effect with noted clinical importance. Pilot and exploratory studies, feasibility studies, and studies where qigong exercise or tai chi performed as qigong exercise were

not the main intervention were excluded. A second search of the database using the same key words was then conducted. This time, along with the filters of *humans* and *years: 2010 through 2014*, the study type was limited to literature *reviews*. Only literature reviews with findings concluding support of therapeutic benefit of qigong and tai chi exercise were included in the final bibliography.

### **Results**

The search and review of the literature resulted in identification of 64 articles: 53 primary, randomized controlled clinical studies and 11 literature reviews validating therapeutic benefit of qigong exercise and tai chi practiced as qigong. The assembled bibliography was then categorized into clinical areas including cancer care, fall prevention, cardiac and cardiovascular, pulmonary care, healthy aging, stress management and immune support quality of life, general health benefits, bone health, Parkinson's, fibromyalgia, arthritis, obesity, diabetes, neurologic, and mode of delivery. In order to facilitate use of the bibliographic resource for users interested in specific clinical areas, when a study's major findings crossed more than one clinical area, it was listed in all major areas of relevance. Also note, the inclusion of more than one reporting of a single study is made when the researchers chose to discuss different aspects of study finding in separate articles. [See appended bibliography for a categorized listing of selected research citations.]

### **Conclusion**

It is hoped that this bibliographic effort will serve as a resource in advancement of qigong exercise practice in health promotion and integrative health care.

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### **Authors' Note:**

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## **Modes of Delivery**

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