

The Integration Of Chinese Qigong With Western Health Care

Western science has been so busy creating new technologies for treating disease that we have lost sight of the difference between medicine and health care. While we have a fantastic and very expensive system based on treating people after they are sick, China has a very inexpensive system of health care based on keeping people well. Health self-reliance and self-care are prominent aspects of their national health care system. Even hospitals that focus on Western methods typically have acupuncture, massage, herbal medicine, Tai Chi and Qigong also available to reduce pain, mediate the side effects of medications and support patients with regulation of sleep, bowel disturbances, pain, anxiety and nausea.

In China, the true definition of health care is to care for one's health. The rationale for self-care is that if citizens can do self-applied health enhancement methods in the comfort of their own home, the health care is free. People can also learn self-care in large groups. Group practice is extremely cost effective.

Chinese self-care, called **Qigong**, combines careful regulation of breath, meditation, deep states of relaxation, visualization, specific movement and posture and, in certain forms, self-applied massage. Such mind/body exercise couples muscular activity with an internally directed focus so that the participant produces a temporary self-contemplative mental state called the **Qigong State**. This state is characterized by a balanced coordination of the healing and health-sustaining resources in the body, including immune function, oxygen distribution, lymphatic flow, autonomic balance and the ample and free-flowing bioelectric activity which the Chinese call **Qi**. This internal focus is in contrast to conventional body-centered aerobic and muscular fitness exercise in which there is little or no mindful component.

There are many varieties of Qigong self-care practice. Some are very mild and aimed at the severely unwell. **Tai Chi** is a moderate level of Qigong that is both curative and preventative, with breath regulation and deep relaxation accompanying its slow movements to reach the "Qigong State".

Hospitals in China present classes on a daily basis where participants learn general forms of Qigong for overall self-care or specific forms that have been perfected to address specific diagnostic areas such as: particular cancers, arthritis, asthma, hypertension, immune deficiency, etc.

PARTICULARS OF THE YANG STYLE TAI CHI CHUAN PRACTICE

The Yang style of Tai Chi brings together several important aspects of human function in one combined activity. Its **Physical motion** emphasizes balance, coordination, flexibility, and aerobic exercise. The relaxation aspect provides a peaceful, **meditative experience** with benefits for health, reduced blood pressure, stress reduction and tension release. **Integration of breathing** provides for both the health benefit of focused breathing, and associated relaxation effects. The **development of qi flow** provides for a method of healthy energy balance and general well-being, according to traditional Chinese medical theory. This unique combination of physical activity, relaxation, meditation, breath control and qi flow provide a profound human experience with potential for a wide range of benefits.