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Medical Qigong adjuvant of western medicine.

Qigong has been known by many names throughout Chinese history. It was first mentioned in a text attributed to a Daoist master Xu Sun /died A.D. 374/ but probably dating from the Ming Dynasty /1368-1644/. The therapeutic /medical/ use of the term dates only from 1936, a certain Dong Hac published in Hangzhou a work entitled "Special Therapy for Tuberculosis Qigong". Since that time "Qigong" has been widely used in this medical sense, representing all Chinese healing exercise and meditation disciplines from ancient times to the present.

Probably the earliest Qigong-like exercises in China are the animal dances of ancient Chinese shamans. Individual Qigong postures and entire styles are modeled after animals. Typical Qigong postures names cited by the Daoist philosopher Huai Nan Zi /d.122 B.C./, include: Bathing Duck, Leaping Monkey, Glaring Owl, and Turning Tiger. From Qigong system developed within the last few centuries come: Lion's Roar, Monkey Hanging From The Tree, Coiling Snake, Old Bear in the Woods, Flying Crane.

The Qigong student cultivates animal skills: balance, suppleness grace and strength. Most important, through Qigong practice, we hope to embody the health, hardiness and vitality of the animals. Some of these dances were believed to confer health and longevity. When the daughter of King Wu /514-495 B.C./ died, he ordered a public performance of the Crane Dance, the symbol of triumph and power over death. Around the same period, Wang Zi-qiac /ca 550 B.C./ a prince and Daoist sage from the state of Qin practiced the Crane Dance as a means to immortality. According to the Daoist legend, when Prince Wang died, he rode to heaven on the back of a crane. The earliest documented reference to Qigong /called "dao-yin" during this period/ as a healing exercise rather than dance is inscribed on twelve pieces of jade dating to the sixth century B.C. containing advice to collect the breath and allow it to descend in the body, presumably to the lower abdomen.

This ancient text could easily be describing present day Qigong techniques. By cultivating quiet, relaxed breathing, qi accumulates and "solidifies" making the body feel stable and balanced. Then the Qi "aprouts", that is moves through the whole body, from the crown of the head to the soles of the feet, cresting vitality and long life.

The Daoist Canon, a collection of 1.120 volumes, contains virtually all the early texts associated with Qigong. The text was probably compiled around A.D. 1145. The methods described are remarkably consistent with Qigong exercises and meditations still being taught in China. The goal of Qigong has also remained the same. According to the Daoist Canon, the adept learns to "expel diseases extend his years and prolong life".

Recent history.

Far about twenty years after the founding of the People's Republic of China, Qigong was actively practiced and researched. New methods were explored and old, traditional methods were systematized and standardized so they could be more readily applied on a wider scale. In 1955, a Qigong sanatorium was founded in the city of Tangchen Hebei Province. A year later two Qigong training centers were established in Hebei.

Another Qigong sanatorium was founded in Shanghai in 1957. In October 1959 China's Ministry of Public Health officially sponsored a national Qigong conference in Beidahe, Hebei Province, inviting representatives from seventeen provinces to attend.

In 1966 this open door was suddenly closed. During the Cultural Revolution /1966-1976/ Qigong was officially prohibited, and interest in it was strongly discouraged. When the revolution was over, Qigong was again accepted as a valid field of research, largely through the influence of one of the great figures in Chinese science Dr Qian Xue-sen the father of Chinese space technology. In 1980 began to advocate using science and technology to research Qigong. In December of 1985, the government gave approval to the formation of the "China Qigong Science Association". In February 1986 symposium sponsored by the Association, Qian declared, many facts show that an intensive scientific study of Qigong will lead to a full development of man's mental as well as physical abilities. In this lecture, Qian remarked that he believed Qigong could even affect intelligence. In 1987 Dr Qian was appointed chair of the prestigious Chinese Science and Technology Association the organization which directs and coordinates China's scientific research.

He said that Chinese Qigong is modern science and technology –high technology –absolutely top technology".

The same year China's Department of Education directed universities to establish Qigong training courses.

Fortunately, in spite of the vicissitudes of Chinese history, the great classical styles of Qigong have persisted.

There have always been simply too many people practicing Qigong, with or without the government's approval, for Qigong to disappear. By 1987 Qigong was being practiced by at least twenty million Chinese.

In 1992, Yu Gongbao of the China Wushu Academy estimated that there were seventy to eighty million practitioners in China.

Qigong has also gained international recognition. In late '80 s. And early '90 s. China hosted several international conferences for the exchange of information on Qigong science.

Two such conferences were held in North America, at the Universities of California at Berkeley in 1990 and in Vancouver, British Columbia in 1995. By 1996, there were more than one thousand published abstracts on some aspect of Qigong science available in English. Chinese bookstores are now filled with books and periodicals on Qigong. There are probably at least one hundred thousand Qigong practitioners outside of China, including several thousand in the United States and Canada and an equal number in Europe. Qigong and Yoga undoubtedly the most popular healing exercises in the world today.

The Experimental Evidence

Active Qigong includes stretching, deep breathing, low-impact conditioning, and isometric. It increases range of motion, builds strength, increases stamina and improves balance and coordination. Internally Qigong movements relax the fascia, the connective tissue that holds the internal organs in place, allowing the organs to work more efficiently. The benefits of exercise documented by western medicine are similar to the findings of Chinese Qigong researches. But Qigong is more than exercise or sports. Qigong's unique combination of movement, breath and meditation improves the functioning of virtually all of the systems of the body and has both preventive and curative effects.

Heart and blood pressure

Qigong strengthens the heart muscle and increases the stroke volume, the amount of blood pumped per minute, so that more oxygen can be delivered to the tissues and more waste products carried away. It also causes the resting heart rate to drop. During more dynamic or demanding form of Qigong, heart rate will increase, but drop afterward. Qigong also lowers high blood pressure. It is likely that relaxation and deep abdominal respiration cause that blood vessels to relax and dilate slightly, creating less resistance to blood flow and thus reduced blood pressure.

Circulatory system

Qigong increases the volume of blood flowing to the brain, hands and feet and in the small capillaries throughout the body. The deep relaxation one achieves during Qigong practice causes the blood vessels to gently dilate, enabling them to carry more blood. Good circulation is extremely important for healthy brain functioning. The better circulation of Qi in peripheral channels increases warmth in the hands and feet.

Digestive system

Qigong improves mechanical aspects of digestion by strengthening the muscles that push food through the alimentary canal. There is also scanty but strongly suggestive evidence that Qigong can improve the chemical aspects of digestion, helping the breakdown of food into nutrients and promoting the elimination of pathogenic bacteria. There are many reasons Qigong benefits digestion. Abdominal breathing massages the digestive organs. As the diaphragm drops and rises, the muscles involved in peristalsis /the pushing of food through the esophagus towards the stomach/. At the same time weak peristalsis is strengthened and excessively strong contractions are reduced. It has been well documented that Qigong is healing gastric and duodenal ulcer. Zhao Liming, a doctor of Traditional Chinese Medicine from Harbin, reported on the use of Qigong in treating 1,278 ulcer patients. On the 190 cases of gastric ulcer, 154 recovered, 34 improved and 2 were ineffective. Of the 955 cases of duodenal ulcer, 742 cured, 202 improved, and 11 were ineffective.

The brain

Many studies have shown that Qigong causes a shift in the brain waves reducing abnormal pattern in diseased patients and improving functioning in the healthy. When 158 cases of cerebral arteriosclerosis were treated with an approximately three month course of Qigong breathing exercises, 16 percent of those with an abnormal brain waves returned to normal. It is known that long term hypertension can interfere with oxygen delivery to the brain and impair brain functioning. A study at the Shanghai Institute of Hypertension suggested that Qigong treatment of Hypertension results in fewer abnormal brain waves. If poor oxygen delivery can produce abnormal brain waves and predispose problems, then it follows that better breathing can improve brain and psychological health.

The Qigong EEG

Scientists recognize four types of brain waves, each categorized by a specific frequency range measured as Hz or cycles per second. The slowest is delta /5-4 Hz/ prevalent during infancy or, in adults, during deep sleep. The next is theta /4-8 Hz/, present during drowsy, barely conscious states and often accompanied by dreamlike images. Trained meditation can produce theta while fully awake by relaxing the mind, emotions and body.

The third is alpha /8-13 Hz/. Alpha indicates an ability to maintain a state relaxed concentration such as focusing on internal images during visualization paying silent attention to a sight or sound, or observing the working of one's own mind. Most people can alpha by simply closing their eyes and relaxing. Alpha is the frequency most commonly produced during meditation.

The quickest brain waves, beta /13-267 Hz or higher/ characterize adult waking consciousness most of the time. Beta predominates when an individual is reading a book or trying to solve a specific problem.

The beta predominant state is called "awareness". Qigong helps the mind to "downshift" from beta to alpha, theta, or a combination of the two. Qigong generally creates a preponderance of high amplitude alpha, measured in microvolts.

Mental health

Mr Dr Wang Jisheng at the Institute of Psychology Chinese Academy of Science evaluated the mental health of 153 individual who had practised Qigong for less than two years /Group 1/ compared with 119 individuals who had practised Qigong for more than two years /Group 2/. Group 2 scored positively /p<0,05/ in such areas as less obsessive traits, anxiety or phobic anxiety and better general indications of mental health.

Group 2 showed more interpersonal sensitivity, less depression or psychosis and better overall scores.

Wang concluded that a longer period of practice has positive effects on most aspects of mental health.

A study conducted by Shigemi Hayashi of the Sino-Japanese Qigong Institute, found in period from 1990-1992 that Qigong practice results in subjective states of emotional wellbeing. Qigong engender emotional stability, increased joy of life, decreased selfishness, more open-minded attitude, increased enthusiasm and will power and greater caring for others.

Respiratory system and asthma

Qigong increases vitality because it conserves energy by lowering the metabolic rate. The body relaxes, the heart beats more slowly and regularly, the mind becomes quiet. The respiratory rate decreases from an average resting rate of sixteen breaths per minute to three to five breath per minute. Both inhalation and exhalation are smoother, with fewer pauses or breaks compared with untrained subjects. In Qigong breathing the lower abdomen moves out with inhalation and in with exhalation. During inhalation the diaphragm drops pushing the abdomen out as the lungs expand and fill with air. During exhalation the diaphragm relaxes and moves back up, the abdomen gently contracts, forcing air out. This method called either "abdominal" or "diaphragmatic" breathing conserves energy since less is required to move the abdomen than to move the chest.

Most importantly, it creates the most favorable conditions for absorbing oxygen and releasing carbon dioxide. Several research workers have documented favorable effects of Qigong on chronic respiratory diseases asthma and chronic bronchitis.

The immune system

Qigong has always been considered an immune enhancing system of mind-body healing. According to Chinese medicine, when Qi and blood are strengthened, we are better to fight off infection and disease. The most compelling evidence of Qigong's immune enhancing effects is found in cancer research.

In China, Qigong is commonly prescribed as an adjunct lessen the side effects of these therapies. Qigong is frequently recommended as the primary therapy for advanced, inoperable and medically untreatable cancer.

In these cases, Qigong can ameliorate pain and other symptoms and slow the progression results in long-term remission. A clinical study conducted by Sun Quizhi and Zhao Li at the Kuangan Men Hospital in Beijing, contrasted the efficacy of two forms of cancer therapy standard drug treatment compared with drugs combined with Qigong practice. One hundred and twenty seven patients were divided into two groups: ninety seven in the drug and Qigong group, thirty cases in the control group. All had been diagnosed with various advanced malignant cancers.

Qigong therapy for advanced cancer patients drugs

Measured effects	Qigong group	Control group
Normalized Liver Function	20.62 %	6.67 %
Normalized Erythrocyte Sedimentation	23.71 %	10 %
Phagocytosis Rate	Increased 12.31 %	Decreased 7.87 %
Regained Strength	81.7 %	10 %
Improved Appetite	63 %	10 %
Free of Irregular Defecation	33.3 %	6 %

Similar drugs were given to both groups. Members of the Qigong group practiced two hours a day for an average at three months. Studies such the one above have been replicated several times with similar positive findings. Favorable results have been obtained treating virtually all forms and stages of cancer with a combination of Qigong along with allopathic drugs, surgery, chemotherapy, radiation, acupuncture and herbs. When Qigong is omitted from the prescription the patient requires a longer period of treatment or declines more quickly and is less likely to experience remission. Qigong may or may not cure the disease. But if it inspires acceptance, faith and hope, it is a good prescription for the soul.

CNCLUSION

Medical Qigong is powerful adjuvant of western medicine.
