

Tai Chi gets cautious thumbs up for psychological health

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Tai Chi, a low impact martial art, has been associated with reduced stress, anxiety and depression, and enhanced mood, in both healthy people and those with chronic conditions. A systematic review of the subject, published in the open access journal *BMC Complementary and Alternative Medicine*, found that although Tai Chi does appear to have positive psychological effects, more high quality, randomized trials are needed.

Dr. Chenchen Wang, Associate Professor, from Tufts Medical Center, Tufts University School of Medicine, Massachusetts, USA, worked with a team of researchers to pool the results of 40 studies, including 17 [randomized controlled trials](#), into the mental health effects of Tai Chi. She said, "Tai Chi, the Chinese low impact mind-body exercise, has been practiced for centuries for health and fitness in the East and is currently gaining popularity in the West. It is believed to improve mood and enhance overall psychological well being, but convincing evidence has so far been lacking".

Wang and her colleagues found that practicing Tai Chi was associated with reduced stress, anxiety, depression and mood disturbance, and increased self-esteem. The quality of the studies identified was generally modest, however. In particular, rigorous, prospective, well controlled randomized trials with appropriate comparison groups and validated outcome measures are generally lacking. Wang said, "More detailed knowledge about the physiological and psychological effects of [Tai Chi](#) exercise may lead to new approaches to promote health, treat chronic

medical conditions, better inform clinical decisions and further explicate the mechanisms of successful mind-body medicine".

More information: Tai Chi on psychological well-being: systematic review and meta-analysis, Chenchen Wang, Raveendhara Bannuru, Judith Ramel, Bruce Kupelnick, Tammy Scott and Christopher H Schmid, BMC Complementary and Alternative Medicine (in press), www.biomedcentral.com/bmccomplementaltermmed/

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