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Effect of Tai Chi on Quality of Life in Older Adults with Major Depression

Tai Chi Chih is a mind-body exercise that is often used for stress reduction for a variety of health conditions. Previous research has demonstrated the beneficial effects of Tai Chi on depression severity. While studies have been conducted to examine the benefits of adding Tai Chi to a standard antidepressant treatment, the direct effects of Tai Chi on the quality of life in people with late-life depression have not been examined. 178 older adults with major depression were randomized into 2 groups, Tai Chi (TAI) and a health education (HEW) control, with 89 subjects per group. At month 3, 124 participants completed the study with 62 participants per group. At month 6, 114 participants completed the study with 59 in the HEW group and 55 in the TAI group. The 36-item Short-Form Survey (SF-36) was used to evaluate health-related quality of life. TaiChi group improved in General Health (TaiChi: 3 month change = 2.8, $t(174) = 2.1$, $p = .04$; 6 month change = 4.9, $t(174)=3.1$, $p = .003$) while HEW did not (HealthEd: 3 month change = .3, $t(174)=.2$, $p = .8$; 6 month change = .4, $t(174)=.3$, $p = .8$). The two groups did not differ in their changes when compared to each other (3 month: $F(1,174) = 1.8$, $p = 0.2$; 6 month: $F(2,174) = 2.1$, $p = 0.1$). Tai Chi practice can help improve general health in older adults with major depression compared to the health education control. Future studies should look further into the use of Tai Chi to improve mental and physical health in geriatric depression.