

Benefits of an Applied Tai Chi program for chronic disease prevention in Australia

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Background: There is increasing evidence that cardiovascular disease (CVD) is linked with a number of psychosocial risk factors and biophysiological risk factors such as metabolic syndrome (MetS). The development of effective community interventions, such as Tai Chi practice to modify high-risk lifestyles and behaviours and reduce psychosocial and biophysiological risk factors, is a promising primary health care approach to prevent CVD.

Aims and objectives: This study compared the difference between pre intervention and 12months after the participants participated in the program in health-related quality of life (HRQoL) in 345 older people (aged 50+) who participated in a community Tai Chi program. In addition, psychological distress and resilience, body mass index (BMI), systolic blood pressure (SBP) and diastolic blood pressure (DBP) were measured and assessed.

Methods: In 2012, a prospective intervention study was conducted to compare a group of community older people participating in a community Tai Chi (meditative exercise) intervention program. Measures included the Short-Form 12 Health Survey (SF-12), General Health Questionnaire (GHQ30), Resilience Scale, BMI and blood pressure. Univariate Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to compare the difference between the pre intervention time and after 12 months of participation in the regular Tai Chi program, when the follow-up data were collected.

Results: Outcomes differed in significance and magnitude across four HRQoL measures, psychological distress and resilience. The Tai Chi group also showed fewer incidences of being overweight, or suffering from obesity and psychological distress compared to the pre intervention time.

Conclusions: Regular and long term Tai Chi (meditative exercise) had a beneficial effect on HRQoL, reducing psychological distress, promoting resilience, managing and taking an active role in managing their health condition, and reducing the BMI and blood pressure level in older people. Tai Chi programs can reduce the prevalence of CVD related risk factors.