

Health Insights Today

A SERVICE OF CLEVELAND CHIROPRACTIC COLLEGE

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CAM In Review

Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) includes a wide range of healing practices. These are among recently published research articles in this developing field, from The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine, the leading scholarly journal in the field.

When reading reports on new research, it is important to remember that no single study should be seen as providing the whole truth. The following reports offer helpful clues but in most cases further research is needed before firm conclusions can be drawn.

Low Back Pain Patients Report Help from Yoga

Low back pain patients (average age 55) at a San Diego Veterans Administration Hospital participated in a yoga class for 10 weeks. Their self-reports showed significant improvements in pain, depression, energy/fatigue, and on the Short Form-12 Mental Health Scale. Those who attended classes regularly and practiced at home showed the greatest improvement. A larger, randomized controlled trial on yoga for low back pain is planned.

Groessler EJ, Weingart KR, Aschbacher K, Pada L, Baxi S. Yoga for veterans with chronic low-back pain. *J Altern Complement Med.* Nov 2008;14(9):1123-1129.

Qigong Eases Stress in Staff at VA Hospital

Working on a hospital staff is universally recognized as a stressful occupation. Fifty staff members at the Denver Veterans Administration Hospital were recruited for a study in which the response of a group practicing qigong (an Asian movement and energy balancing discipline) for six weeks was compared to people on a waiting list who continued with life as normal with no intentional changes in routine. The goal was to determine whether perceived stress and quality of life in hospital staff would improve with the addition of qigong practice. Of the 37 participants completing the study, the qigong group attained significantly greater gains in perceived stress reduction and pain levels.

Griffith JM, Hasley JP, Liu H, Severn DG, Conner LH, Adler LE. Qigong stress reduction in hospital staff. *J Altern Complement Med.* Oct 2008;14(8):939-945.

Tai Chi Improves Aerobic Capacity and Heart Risk Factors

In a study on patients with high blood fat levels at the National Taiwan University College of Medicine, 53 patients were divided into a group that participated in a 12-month yang tai chi chuan training program for 12 months and another group that maintained a sedentary lifestyle during that time. Exercise testing was conducted at baseline and after 1 year of training. Body composition, lipid profile, fasting glucose and insulin levels, and inflammatory markers were also measured before and after training.

After training, the tai chi group showed an increase in oxygen uptake during exercise while the usual-care group displayed a significant decrease. The tai chi group also showed a reduction in blood pressure, triglycerides, total cholesterol, LDL cholesterol, plasma insulin, homeostasis model assessment index, and high-sensitivity C-reactive protein. The usual-care group showed no significant improvement in these cardiovascular risk factors.

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Lan C, Su T-C, Chen S-Y, Lai J-S. Effect of tai chi chuan training on cardiovascular risk factors in dyslipidemic patients. *J Altern Complement Med.* 2008;14(7):813-819.

Vibration Exercise Improves Pain and Fatigue in Fibromyalgia

Fibromyalgia involves widespread non-inflammatory musculoskeletal pain with tenderness on palpation in a minimum of 11 of the 18 tender points for at least 3 months. Numerous symptoms may also be associated with this syndrome, including fatigue, anxiety, depression, nonrestorative sleep, muscular stiffness, or irritable bowel syndrome. In a Spanish study comparing three groups, neither a control group nor a group doing conventional exercise for 90 minutes daily for six weeks experienced reduction in pain and fatigue. But a group that performed the conventional exercise combined with whole-body vibration showed significant benefits in both outcomes, with no adverse side-effects.

Alentorn-Geli E, Padilla J, Moras G, Haro CL, Fernandez-Sola J. Six Weeks of Whole-Body Vibration Exercise Improves Pain and Fatigue in Women with Fibromyalgia. *J Altern Complement Med.* 2008;14(8):975-981.

Reiki Brings No Changes in Fibromyalgia

Reiki is a form of energy healing developed in Japan, in which the practitioner seeks to transmit healing energy into the patient through his or her hands. In a randomized controlled trial involving 100 fibromyalgia patients at Seattle medical offices, 4 groups received twice-weekly treatment for 8 weeks by either a Reiki master or actor randomized to use direct touch or no touch (distant therapy). The primary outcome was subjective pain as measured by visual analog scale at weeks 4, 8, and 20 (3 months following end of treatment). Secondary outcomes were physical and mental functioning, medication use, and health provider visits. Participant blinding and adverse effects were ascertained by self-report. Neither Reiki nor touch had any effect on pain or any of the secondary outcomes.

Assefi N, Bogart A, Goldberg J, Buchwald D. Reiki for the treatment of fibromyalgia: a randomized controlled trial. *J Altern Complement Med.* Nov 2008;14(9):1115-1122.