

United States: Medical Tai Chi (qigong) - Chinese 'miracle Exercise' Popular As U.S. Health Costs Rise

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Dr. Mehmet Oz on Oprah called qigong "the secret to anti-aging." It's the "miracle exercise" for people seeking to avoid drugs, surgery, and expensive doctor bills. Medical Tai Chi, known in China as Qigong, may eventually replace health insurance for many Americans. Qigong ('chee gong', or chi kung) retreats are growing in popularity in the USA as a low-cost, self-care health system (see also Health Insurance).

Medical Qigong looks similar to martial Tai Chi, but its slow movements are medically designed to boost the immune system and open acupuncture "chi" channels -- without using needles. Qigong is self-applied Chinese medicine, used to heal chronic illness for over 2500 years.

"Medical Qigong is the mother of Tai Chi, but simpler to learn," says Michael Winn, National Qigong Association ex-president. "It's the intelligent man's way to exercise. Qigong is relaxing. Paradoxically, the less effort you make, the more powerful the healing energy it generates. You feel peaceful afterwards. For most, sweaty exercise at the gym is a job. But people love their qigong. Yoga and martial tai chi styles are also healthy alternatives, but qigong is medically far more effective. Qigong can be targeted to heal specific mental or physical illnesses. I've witnessed countless healings in people abandoned by the medical system."

Winn, a 30-year Qigong practitioner, dropped his own health insurance decades ago, and claims to rarely get sick. Attendance at his low-cost non-profit summer retreats at Heavenly Mountain (www.HealingTaoRetreats.com) near Blowing Rock, North Carolina, is growing as the economy gets worse. "Rising health insurance is forcing many people to shift to low-cost prevention vs. expensive 'cure -it-later' hospital solutions. Even swine flu is waking people up. They realize a strong immune system is your only true insurance. That is who survived earlier pandemics."

Dr. Brian Lewis, an integrative medicine expert, notes: "Studies in the United States and in other countries have shown numerous benefits from Qi Gong. It is an effective, accessible, and empowering form of self care that I have found to be deeply healing for myself and my patients. Through the simple practices of Qi Gong patients of many religious and cultural backgrounds have discovered the innate healing capacities and spiritual depths within themselves. I believe that preventive and self-care methods such as Qi Gong will be an essential part of a sustainable health care system."

Dr. Bryan Lewis, integrative healthcare expert MD, notes a similar trend. "I'm seeing more aging baby-boomers choosing to invest \$1,000 on a week-long 'health vacation-training' instead of \$25,000. in yearly insurance premiums. Others are turning to cheap alternatives like qigong because they simply cannot afford insurance. The NIH knows that greater reliance on prevention and self-care is the only long term solution our national health system can afford. If 200 million Chinese rely upon medical qigong for good health -- why can't Americans?"

The hard science behind qigong is impressive. (<http://www.healingtaousa.com/cgi-bin/articles.pl?rm=mode2 & articleid@>) There are over 3500 studies proving regular Qigong practice is highly effective in preventing and healing chronic illness. A 20 year qigong study showed a 50% reduction in mortality from stroke.

Tina Zhang was once a travel agent in New York City. "I felt so stressed working two jobs to pay health premiums -- it was making me sick!" She began exploring Chinese healing arts. "I realized Qi Gong and Tai Chi are much better medical investments than pouring money down a bottomless insurance hole. I don't trust Medicare to take care of me -- it may go broke when 75 million baby boomers start to age. I prefer to take care of my own health".

Tina now teaches women how to regulate hormones and ease menstrual cycles with Women's Qigong. She's become one of the 20 Qigong masters teaching Healing Tao summer retreats at Heavenly Mountain, the largest program of its kind in America. Other types of medical qigong retreats include natural weight loss Qigong Breathing, deep organ massage, Qi energy healing, Taoist medical sexology, and Tao-Yin (Chinese yoga).(www.HealingTaoRetreats.com).

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