Tai Chi
Johanna Wilde, L1

Often considered a type of ‘moving meditation,’ Tai Chi is a Chinese martial art based on slow, controlled movements with smooth, fluid transitions between them and an emphasis on calmness and meditation. A practitioner of Tai Chi is encouraged to concentrate on what he or she is doing throughout the duration of the movement, thereby focusing the mind and imparting upon the practitioner a sense of connection between the physical and mental selves.

Tai Chi has been known to have many physical and mental health benefits, one of the most significant being stress reduction. The better a person’s mental state, the more likely it is that his or her physical state will be good as well. Tai Chi aims to integrate these conditions to improve in the overall well-being of the practitioner.

Some of the physical benefits of Tai Chi are:

- Improved balance (this is especially good for older adults)
- More efficient cardiac function
- Decreased blood pressure
- Very low impact exercise (this is especially good for the elderly, overweight and people with joint problems)
- Overall increased muscular endurance and strength
- Joint flexibility and stiffness reduction in arthritis sufferers.
- Decreased incidence of anxiety, depression, and mood disturbance

Perspectives on Evolution and Exercise – A lesson from the past

Justin Meunier, L2

A current cultural problem we must deal with is our view of exercise as an optional activity, like a hobby one might do when one has enough time or interest. The most dangerous part of this viewpoint is that most of us actually ascribe to it. None of us exercises as if our life depends on it, which is just the way our ancestors did it, and which is just the way we were designed to do it.

As our species evolved, our body systems were developing and resolving the issues of internal health and harmony. At that time we were constantly moving and exercising, so much so that these activities became an integral part of our biochemical balance. The take home lesson here is that humans were designed to move, but too often we choose to be sedentary, setting us up for all sorts of avoidable medical conditions, such as obesity, hypertension, diabetes, and heart disease. Remove physical activity from our daily routine and see our health begin to deteriorate. Incorporate the lessons from the past into your modern American life and honor your exercise heritage by making physical activity a part of your daily life.

Make physical activity part of your daily life:

- Walking stairs (instead of taking the elevator)
- Dancing (especially at post-test parties)
- Carrying a grocery basket rather than pushing a cart (when applicable)
- Parking in the farthest parking spot and walking to the store or school
- Pacing around or going for a walk while talking on the phone

Qi Gong

Carrie Spangler, L1

Qi gong (pronounced “chē gong”) was originally a part of a Chinese warrior’s training and is the basis for many martial arts, such as kung fu. There are many forms of qigong, one of the most recognized ones today being the series of formalized qigong routines known as tai chi.

In traditional Chinese medicine qi is the vital energy that flows through the human body. Blockages or imbalances of qi are believed to cause disease and pain. Qigong is an individual practice utilized both for the prevention and treatment of disease through a combination of breath-work, meditation and physical exercise.

Roughly eight million people in China practice qigong. It is promoted by the government as a tool to contain medical costs through prevention, partly because it is believed to increase the practitioner’s immune function and longevity. Qigong has also been shown to reduce stress levels: Qigong’s goal of remaining flexible and relaxed in all one does confers many benefits to modern practitioners living in a chaotic world.

Qi gong is also used to treat many chronic diseases. Its extensive health benefits are also employed in the treatment of asthma, endocrine disorders and cancer. Large clinical trials are necessary to further our understanding of qigong’s role in the treatment of chronic disease.

However, this is no reason to wait to try Qigong, for its slow, thoughtful movements have, for centuries, been enacted to center the practitioner’s mind and ward off the detrimental effects of daily stress.

Qi Gong helps hypertensive patients by reducing:

- Blood pressure
- Norepinephrine levels
- Epinephrine levels
- Cortisol levels

Yoga position of the Month - **Sarvangasana** ("all parts pose")

Carrie Goodson, L1

**Instructions:**
1. Lie flat on your back with your arms by your sides, palms facing down.
2. Raise your hips and legs up and over your head.
3. As you exhale, bring your hands up to your back, grasping as close to the floor as possible (this allows for a straighter and more vertical torso). Wrap your thumbs around the front of your body, fingers around the back.
4. Straighten your back and legs as much as possible. Your chin will be pressed into your chest.
5. Stay in the pose, breathing deeply and regularly, for ten breaths (or up to 30 minutes with advanced practice). Do not stare at your feet! Look at your chest/abdomen instead—it keeps the pose more internal and meditative.
6. Come down by first returning your hands to the floor, then lowering your back to the floor, one vertebra at a time working inferiorly, and finally lowering your legs as well.

Ideally, you should follow this pose with one that stretches the neck in the opposite direction (like fish pose or a backbend).

**Benefits:**

This is one of the major asanas in yoga practice. It is believed to be beneficial to many parts of the body; hence it's Sanskrit name *sarvangasana*, which can be translated as "all parts pose." Its most discussed benefits include:

- Stimulation of the **thyroid** and **parathyroid glands** due to pressure from the chin.
- Stretching of the **cervical** and **upper thoracic regions** of the spine
- **Circulatory** - gravity is helping here with **venous drainage** of the lower extremities
- Abdominal muscles and organs are toned and strengthened


**Question of the Month to Dr. Roca: How can I keep my focus when I feel so tired of studying?**

There are several approaches you can take to enhance your ability to study even when you feel tired and fatigued:

1. **Take frequent breaks.** During those breaks do something active like going for a walk or running an errand.
2. **Eat a high protein snack with healthy fats** - like a bit of fish or some almonds. Don't use carbs to stay awake.
3. **Don't use caffeine** or stimulants to enhance focus.
4. **Use different methods of studying.** Mix it up. Use an audio tape or do a palpation exercise.
5. **Keep some aromatherapy nearby** especially lemon, mint, and eucalyptus.
6. **Take time for pray and meditation** - not as a desperate means of petition but rather as a means of centering and relaxation.
7. If you don't meditate then use **some deep breathing**. Clear your mind then fill it again.
8. **Stick to your regimen. Do not procrastinate.** When it is time to switch your topic - switch it. During the final minutes work to reinforce what you already know rather than cramming additional sets of facts.
9. **Use Rhodiola rosea and Panax ginseng** to help build mental stamina.
An old Chinese proverb states that a hinge that is continually used will never rust. Consider this statement, then look at some older individuals who have become stiff and creaky, like a rusty hinge, largely because they have not made exercise a regular part of their life. Now identify some individuals of the same age group who have been physically active on a regular basis and compare their movements to those of people in the first group. You’ll notice a vast difference in functional ability among people of the same age group based simply on whether or not they’ve maintained some sort of physical activity in their lives.

I noticed this trend while I was working as a personal trainer, and though it is based purely on my own observations, there are many health and longevity benefits of exercise that are well known to the scientific community that could help explain these observations. The good news is that even if you’re an older individual, and your hinges are beginning to creak and rust, there’s still time to change your habits. The American College of Sports Medicine has shown that even individuals who have lived basically sedentary lives can not only help maintain what function they still have, but they can improve their strength, flexibility and endurance, while simultaneously decreasing risk factors for many common diseases such as obesity, hypertension, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. These improvements can be made by simply beginning a moderate daily physical activity like walking, or, even better, supervised resistance aerobic training. It’s not too late to start making physical activity a part of your life so that your golden years don’t become your rusty years.


IMIG Update: WELLNESS DAY—Thursday, Nov. 9th

- Breath work
- Massage therapist (chair AND table) - shiatsu, deep tissue
- Natural plant based foods
- Yoga
- Reiki (energy work)
- ENF - electromagnetic field balancing, polarity balancing
- Therapeutic body work
- Meridian work
- Thought field therapy
- How to make a wellness home - no chemicals/radiation
- Acidic/alkaline based food/ H2O education
- Flower essence therapy
- Acupuncture
- Aromatherapy

Free massages!

Lunch catered by Whole Foods!

When? Thursday, Nov. 9th
11-3pm
Where? MEB Atrium (3rd floor)
LSUHSC Wellness Center
Karynne Hoffman, Wellness Center Director

The Wellness Center is dedicated to promoting the health and well being of all members of the LSU Health Sciences Center community in a safe and educational environment.

Amenities

- 18,000 square feet
- Cardiovascular equipment: treadmills, bikes (upright and recumbent), ellipticals, rowers, and stair climbers
- Selectorized weight equipment: Nautilus Nitro
- Plate loaded/free weights
- A multipurpose room for group exercise activities, such as group cycling, mind body (yoga/pilates), step, resistance training, etc.
- Spacious locker rooms with shower facilities

Membership Requirements

All individuals must show a valid LSUHSC I.D. on the 3rd floor of Stanislaus Hall for entrance into the Fitness/Wellness Center. In addition, initially, each individual member must complete an Express Assumption of Risk Release of Liability Form and a PAR-Q.

Membership Eligibility

LSUHSC Faculty / Staff / Students / Residents as well as *Family Members are admitted into the facility with a valid and current LSUHSC ID.

*Family Members – spouses or children 16yrs. or older.

Hours of Operation

Monday—Friday: 6:30 am to 8:00 pm
Saturday: 9:00 am to 1:00 pm
Sunday: Closed

Thank you...

We would like to offer thanks to the American Medical Student Association Foundation’s EDCAM program, Whole Foods Company, the Wholistic Wellness Network, LSUHSC Family Medicine Department, and our faculty advisor, Dr. Henri Roca who is Chief of LSU’s Section of Integrative Medicine and a Holistic Area Resource Person of the American Holistic Medical Association.

Editor: Mamina Turegano, L2 Medicine
Assistant Editor: Lauren Hebert, L1 Medicine
Contributors/Helpers:
Carrie Goodson, L1 Medicine
Karynne Hoffman, LSUHSC Wellness Center Director
Jeff Marino, L2 Medicine
Justin Meunier, L2 Medicine
Carrie Spangler, L1 Medicine
Johanna Wilde, L1 Medicine

Faculty Advisor:
Henri Roca, MD, Chief of Section of Integrative Medicine, Department of Family Medicine

Donations can be made out to the LSU Foundation. Please specify LSU Section of Integrative Medicine on the comment line. Send donations to 2364 Constance Street, New Orleans, LA 70130.