



# Best Taiji (T'ai Chi) practices: Essential aspects of traditional curriculum and methods of training



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November 5, 2007

Washington, D.C.



# Objectives



- What is traditional Taiji?
- Benefits of Taiji practice
- Experience essential components of practice
- Research summary
- Future directions



# Transliteration of Chinese Characters

Chinese	太极	无极	太极拳	气	功	气功
WG	T'ai <i>chi</i>	Wuchi	T'aiChiChuan	<i>Ch'i</i>	Kung	Ch'ikung
PY	Tai <i>ji</i>	Wuji	Taijiquan	<i>Qi</i>	Gong	Qigong
WG: Wade-Giles; PY: Pinyin						



# What Is Traditional Taiji?



Full name: Taijiquan.

“Taiji” means the balance of yin and yang.

“Quan” means fist. Taijiquan is a martial art rooted in the Daoist philosophical concepts about the interplay and necessary balance of yin and yang.

*Xujing* (tranquility) of mind and spirit is the essence of Taiji, as well as its ultimate goal.



# Potential Benefits of Taiji Practice

- Primary (skill-related)
- Secondary (other therapeutic)
- Holistic



## Primary Benefits

# Why the Core Curriculum Was Created

- Postural control
- Strength/Power
- Sensitivity
- Flexibility
- Coordination
- Agility
- Reaction time
- Confidence



# Secondary/Therapeutic



- Cardio-respiratory function
- Immune function
- Cognitive function
- Quality of sleep
- Bowel function
- Others



# Holistic



药补不如食补,食补不如气补,气补不如神补。

*Yào bǔ bù rú shí bǔ, shí bǔ bù rú qì bǔ, qì bǔ bù rú shén bǔ.*

To improve your health,  
medicine is not as good as food/nutrition;  
food/nutrition is not as good as *qi(gong)*;  
*qi(gong)* is not as good as spiritual nourishment.





# How to Realize the Benefits



**The Best Practice = The Most Efficient Practice**

事半功倍

*Shì bàn gōng bèi.*

Half the work, double the result

*If you practice and study efficiently,  
you can learn in a fraction of the time.*



# The Most Efficient Practice-Essential Curriculum

- Qigong
- Form
- Push-hands



# Pillar I: Qigong



Static: lying down, sitting, standing meditation

Dynamic: movement drills, taiji form, push-hands, daily activity



# Qigong



练拳不练功,到老一场空。

*Lǎn quán bù liǎn gōng, dào lǎo yī chǎng kōng.*

If you practice form (external movement),  
but do not practice *gong*,  
even if you practice your whole life,  
your art will be empty.

*Transliteration issue: 拳, quan (piyin), chuan (Wade-Giles), very close to Chuang.*



# Sitting Meditation



不静不见动之奇

*Bù jìng bù jiàn dòng zhī qí.*

**If you don't have quietness or tranquility, you will  
never see the miracle of movement.**



# Standing Meditation

百动不如一静,百练不如一站。

*Bǎi dòng bù rú yījìng, bǎi liàn bù rú yīzhàn.*

One hundred movements are not as good as one stillness;  
one hundred practices are not as good as one standing (pole).



# Lying Qigong



- Elongate body
- Very good for neck, back, and sleep



# Pillar II

## Choreographed Form Movement







# Pillar III Push-hands



Two-person balance, strength, and reaction training



# Summary of Taiji Research General



- Balance
- Strength and flexibility
- Cardio-respiratory fitness
- Multiple sclerosis
- Arthritis
- Microcirculation and endothelial function
- Immune function
- Dementia
- General stress management



# UIUC Taiji Study #1



周身一家，力发一点，点点透骨。

*Zhōu shēn yījiā, lì fā yīdiǎn, diǎn diǎn tòu gǔ.*

The whole body is one family, the released energy should focus on one point, [as a result] every touch can penetrate the bone.



# Strength and Force Control



Taiji training improved **both** knee extensor strength and force control in older adults.

Christou E. A., Yang Y., & Rosengren K. S. Taiji training improves knee extensor strength and force control in older adults. *J Gerontol A Biol Sci Med Sci* . 2003; 58: M763–M766.



# UIUC Taiji Study #2

## Balance Mechanisms

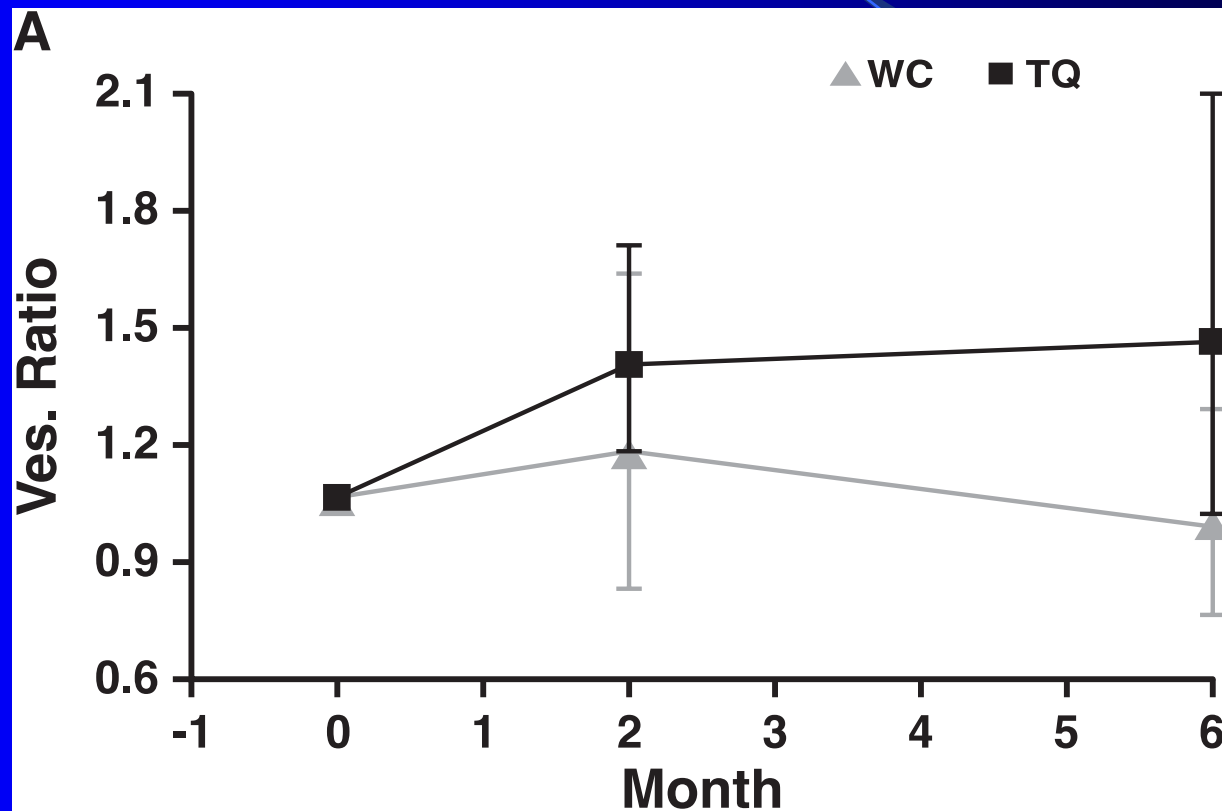


Improved use of vestibular input and wider stances are two mechanisms by which Taiji/Qigong training may improve healthy older adults' balance. Other balance mechanisms may contribute to balance improvements; so may different aspects of traditional Taiji practice.

Yang, Y., Verkuilen, J., Grubisich, S., et al. Strategic and sensory mechanisms for improved balance afforded by combined Qigong and Taiji training for older adults: a randomized controlled trial. (Accepted by Medical Science Monitor), 2007.

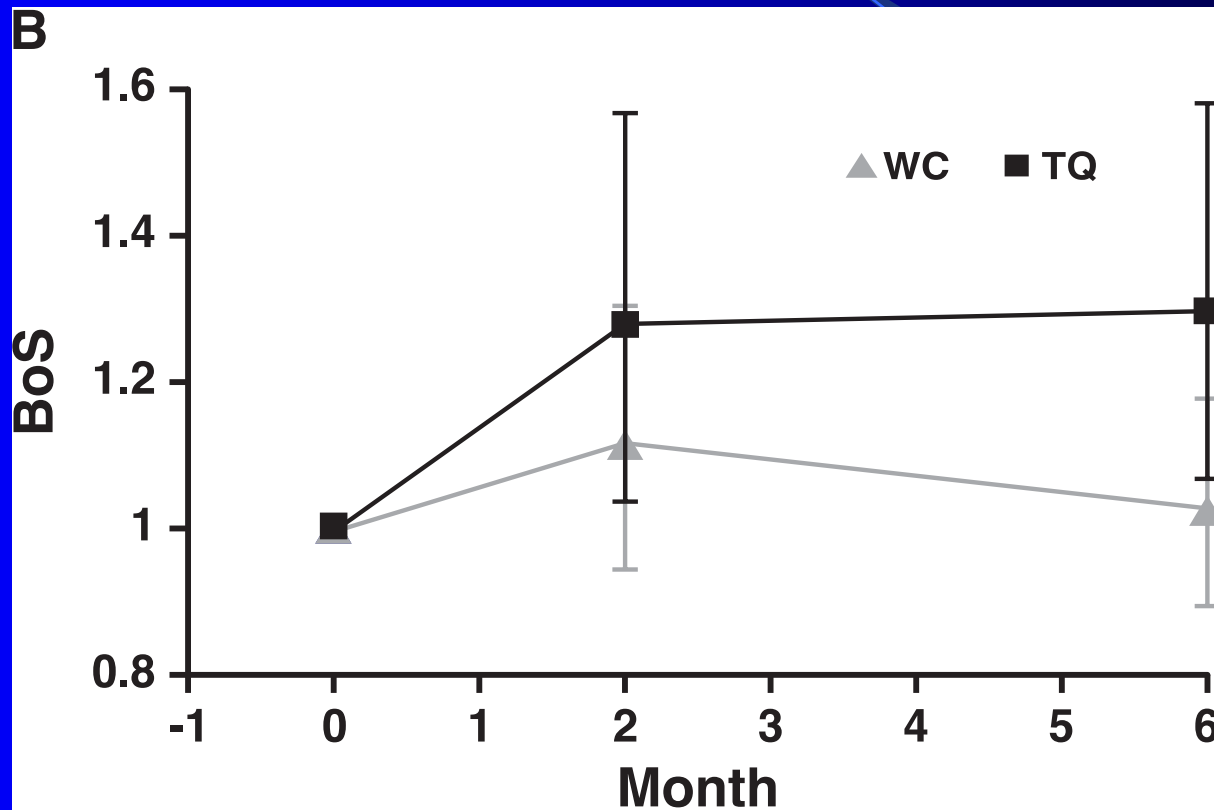


# SOT Ves. Ratio





# Base of Support





# UIUC Taiji Study #3



气功能祛病, 缘由在松静.

*Qigong neng qu bing, yuan you zai song jing.*

*Song* (relaxation) and *jing* (tranquility/quietness) are the reasons why *qigong* can heal you.





# Taiji and Immune Function

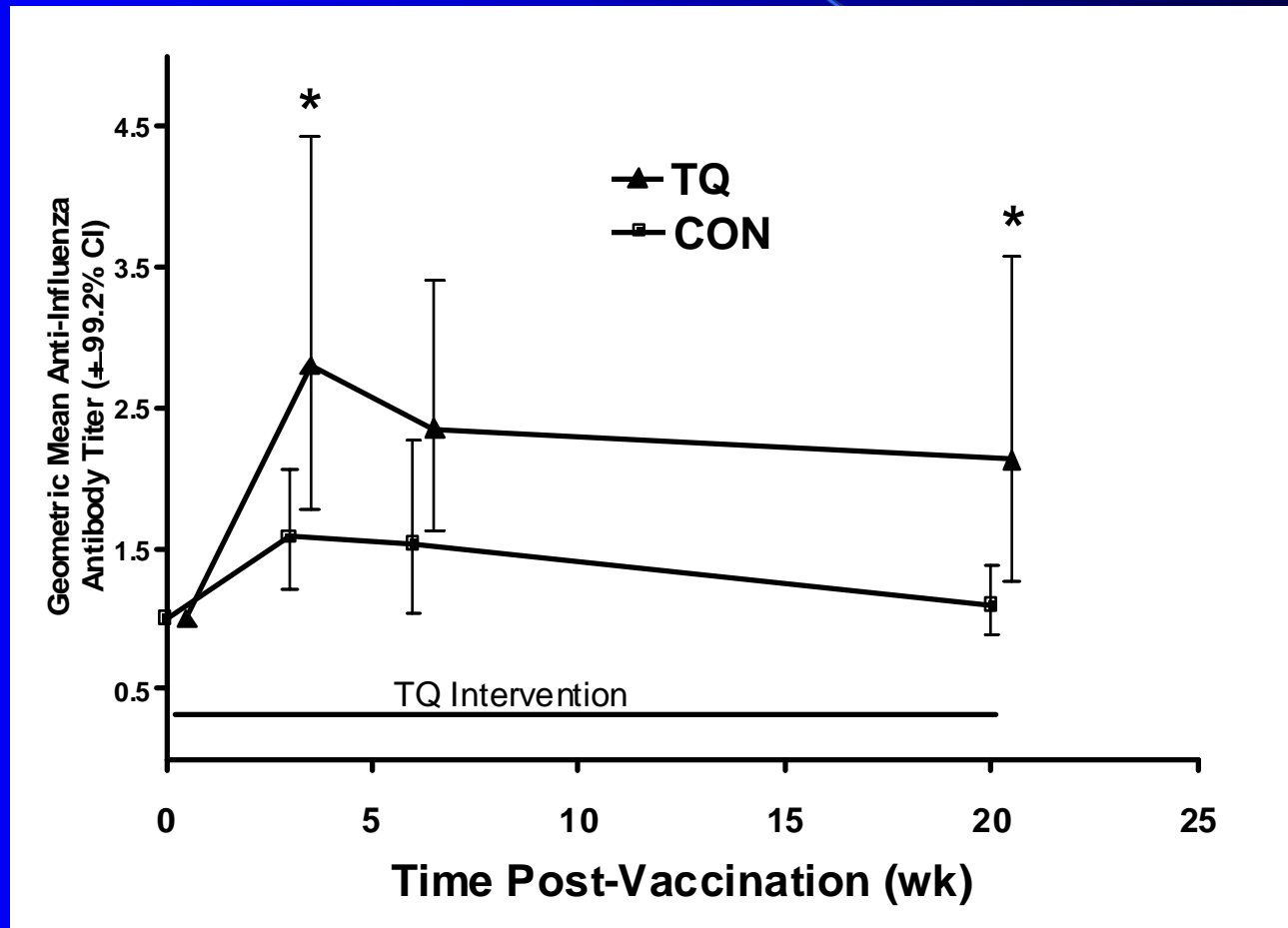


Traditional TQ practice improves the antibody response to influenza vaccine in older adults, but further study is needed to determine whether the enhanced response is sufficient to provide definitive protection from influenza infection.

Yang, Y., Mariani, R. A., Reed, M., Rosengren, K. S., and Woods, J.A. Effects of Taiji (T'ai Chi) and Qigong (Ch'i Kung) on the immune response to influenza vaccine in the elderly. Accepted by American Journal of Chinese Medicine, 2007.

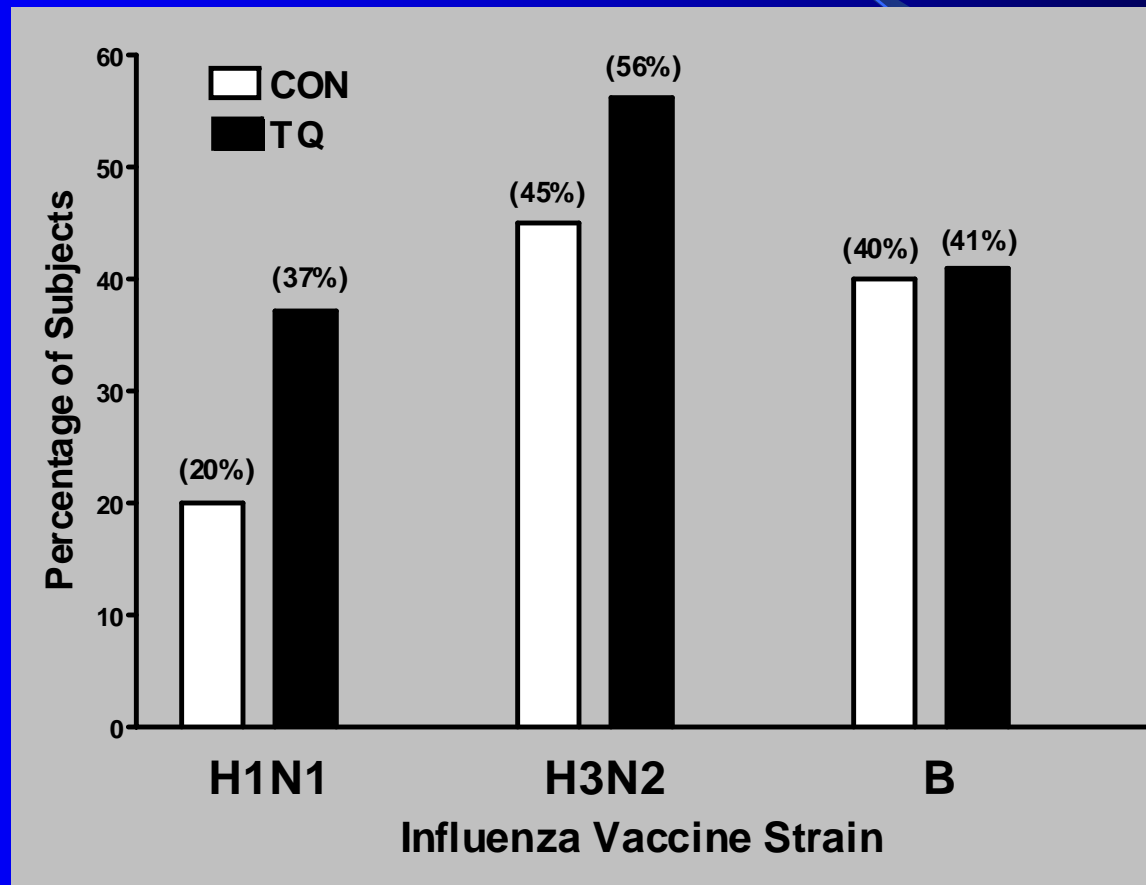


# HI Antibody Titers ( $\pm$ 99.2% confidence interval )





# Percent of Subjects Responding with >40HI Response





# UIUC Taiji Study #4



“performed in all states and stages, on  
all planes of mind”

*Indian Yoga Sutra*



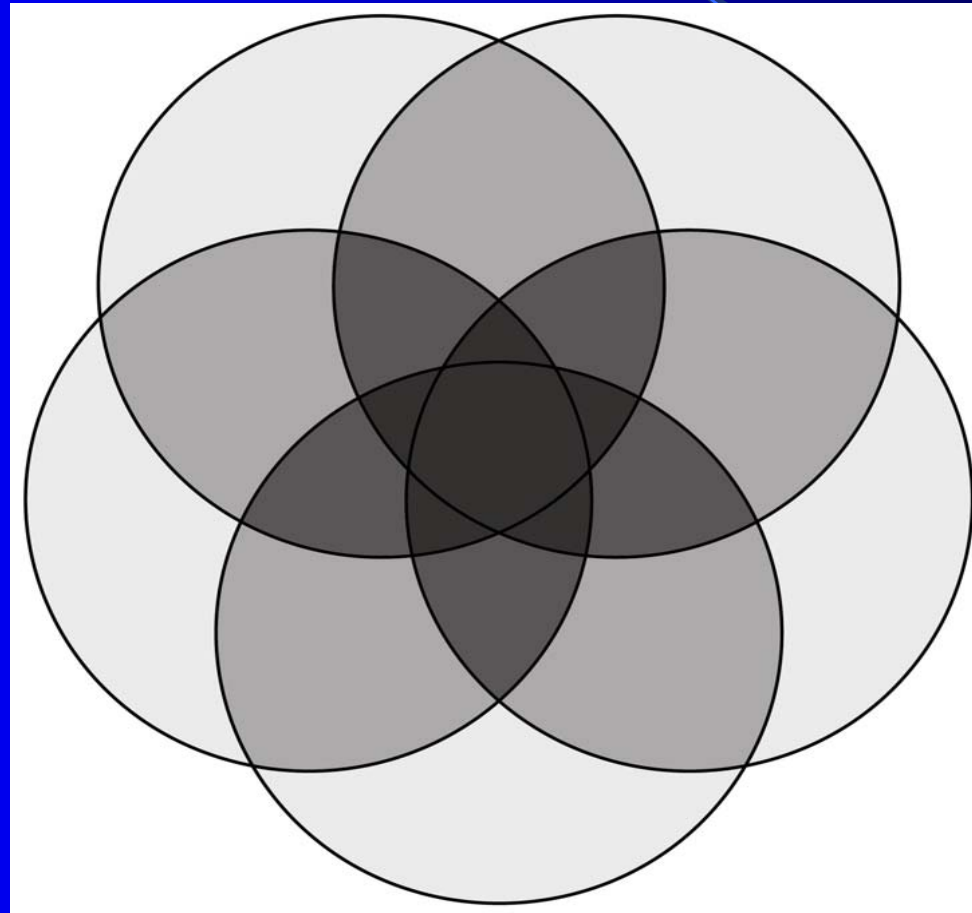
# Qualitative Method



- Interviewed participants after 6 months
- Open-ended interview
- Eight information-rich participants
- Five categories of coding: social, emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual.



# Lotus Model





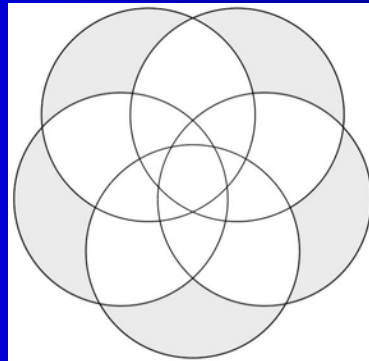
# Layer 1

## Simple Benefits



*“I have more strength in my legs and better balance.”*

*“Now I can put my socks and jeans on just like I always used to, standing up instead of sitting down.”*

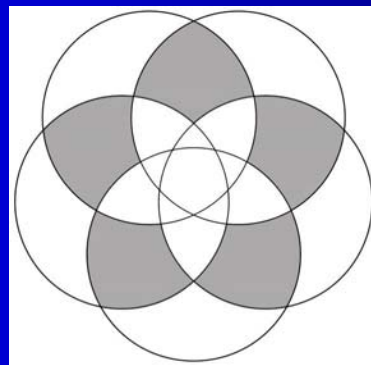




## Layer 2 Complex Benefits



*“You are more aware of how you stand, how you sit, how you move. That carries over into everyday life.”*



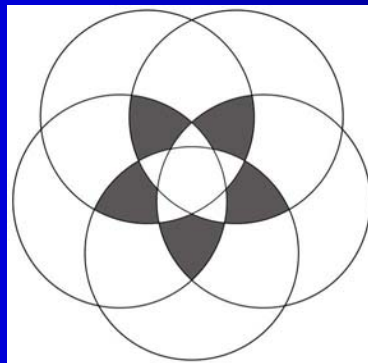




# Layer 3 Immersion



*“I have the sense that I am not going to go downhill nearly as quickly as I might have. It is a very positive way to feel.”*



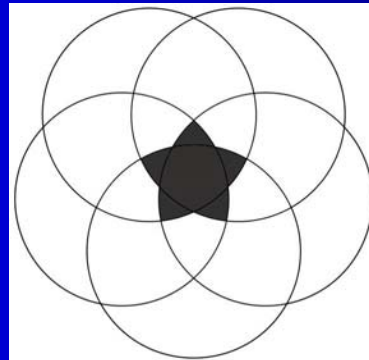


# Layer 4 Integration



*“I am going to live the rest of my life differently.”*

*“I think this is just grand! To learn something when you are in your late 70s that you can use for however long you happen to live: I mean what greater gift could you expect? You don't think about 70-year-olds really learning new things they can carry on – this is so unexpected. This has made me feel much younger, much younger, let's say 10 years. . . . Someone who hasn't done this has no comprehension about how much better it has made me feel.”*





# Findings



TQ participants derived a wide variety of perceived benefits, the most meaningful being a sense of body/mind/spirit integration. The results also suggest that qualitative studies can play a useful role in elucidating the possible benefits and mechanisms of Taiji and Qigong.

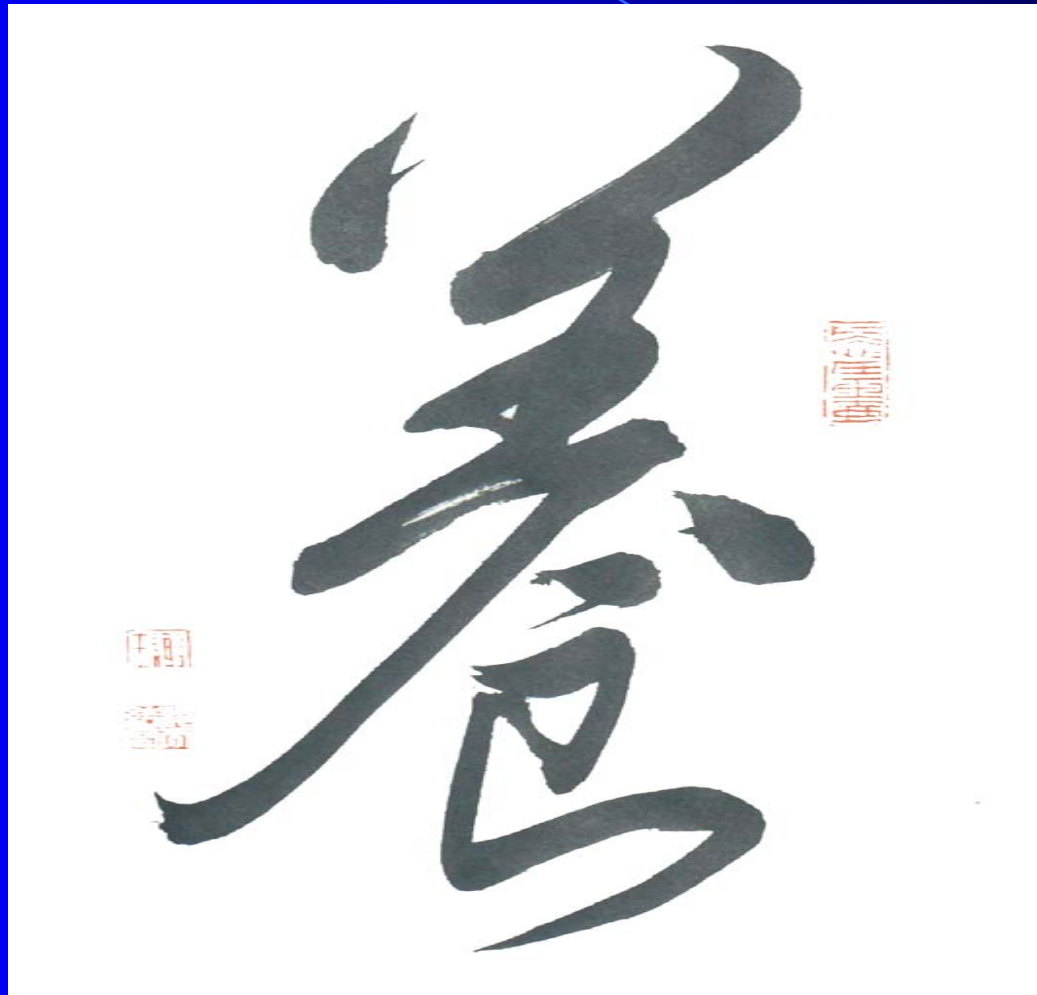
Yang, Y., DeCelle, S., Reed, M., et al. My life is my art: Lived experiences of older adults practicing Taiji (T'ai Chi) and Qigong (Ch'i Kung). Under review. 2007.



# Future Direction



- Using traditional curriculum to deepen our understand of this ancient art
- Test effect of each component and the combined effects
- Share Taiji/Qigong with the general public.







Thank you