

Tai Chi Easy

About the National Expert Meeting on Qi Gong and Tai Chi Consensus Initiative

Given the well-known benefits of Qi Gong and Tai Chi and due to the great need in America for wellness, disease prevention and vitality enhancement, a collaboration of key institutions convened to help resolve the Health Care Crisis.

- The Healer Within Foundation
- The Archstone Foundation
- University of Illinois, Office of the National Blueprint for Physical Activity
- The National Council on Aging (NCOA)
- The Institute of Integral Qigong and Tai Chi (IIQTC)



In 2003 the National Council on Aging funded The Healer Within Foundation, the nonprofit education and research arm of the Institute of Integral Qigong and Tai Chi, to implement a pilot study of its Tai Chi Easy™ program. Tai Chi Easy™ combines Qi Gong and Tai Chi in a program that is easy and fun.

Nearly 400 participants completed pre and post assessments and the findings were very positive (read report) through the statistical analysis provided by the University of Illinois. The pilot findings were reported by James Firman, Director of the National Council on Aging and Dr. Roger Jahnke, OMD, Director of the Institute of Integral Qigong and Tai Chi, in the spring of 2004, at the joint conference of the NCOA and American Society on Aging (NCOA/ASA) in San Francisco, CA.

Dr. Wojtek Chodzko-Zajko of the office of the National Blueprint for Physical Activity <http://www.agingblueprint.org/> was then able to engage the Archstone Foundation which contributed a \$250,000 grant to convene the National Expert Meeting on Qi Gong and Tai Chi at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in November 2005. The Consensus Document that emerged from these proceedings and a set of recommendations were released at the 2006 combined conference of the NCOA/ASA in Anaheim, CA.

An article in *The Journal on Active Aging, Volume 5, Issue 5* (September/October 2006) entitled Qi Gong and Tai Chi: promoting practices that promote healthy aging provides an overview of the recommendations and outcomes of the National Expert Meeting. (A copy of this article follows)

The mind/body wellness exercises of Asia have a significant potential to improve health care in the Western world. In November 2005, a panel of more than 30 recognized experts in Qi Gong and Tai Chi, physical activity and aging, and biomedical research gathered to explore and recommend strategies for proliferating accessible Qi Gong and Tai Chi programs.

Historically, for thousands of years in the case of Qi Gong and hundreds of years in the case of Tai Chi, the benefits of practice were limited to martial artists, monks and Imperial court ministers. Recently through decades of political upheaval Qi Gong and Tai Chi have become more widely available in China, however, the benefits have not been thoroughly understood.

Even as these mind/body wellness practices entered the US and Europe successful programs did not engage in research. Much of the information that was gathered about effectiveness emerged from intervention programs of short duration that were designed primarily for research.

Many questions must be answered in order to translate research evidence into robust Qi Gong and Tai Chi community programs that can be delivered in a variety of settings including hospitals, social service agencies, schools, corporations, faith based institutions and retirement communities.

The more traditional Qigong and Tai Chi programs that assist participants in deeper understanding will tend to attract greater numbers when entry-level programs are more widely available.

The panel of experts agreed that the major challenge to the wide dissemination of these profound practices has been the exclusive dependence on masters or experts to transmit the teachings. For community based programs to proliferate the benefits of Qi Gong and Tai Chi, it was determined that lay leaders and peer practice leaders must be trained in the fundamentals of Qi Gong and Tai Chi to create a wider entry level to the practices.

This is similar to the morning practice in the parks in China where the large numbers (estimated 100 million on a daily basis) are mobilized by citizen teachers. More advanced practice groups get students from these entry-level classes.

This much more open entry level then will significantly increase the numbers of students that make their way to the more advanced teachings. The expert panel used a powerful process of information gathering to reach consensus on these questions:

1. What are the components of Qigong and Tai Chi programs that need to be included to achieve significant benefits?
2. What knowledge, skills, and abilities are necessary to lead Qi Gong and Tai Chi

- programs in the community?
3. What research needs to be conducted to increase understanding of Qi Gong and Tai Chi's potential benefits?
 4. What are the best ways for integrating Qi Gong and Tai Chi programs into aging and other health care and social service networks?

The Consensus Report (A copy of this report follows) outlines the recommendations and outcomes of the National Expert Meeting on Qi Gong and Tai Chi. The conveners of this meeting -- National Blueprint Office at the University of Illinois, the National Council on Aging and the Institute of Integral Qigong and Tai Chi funded by the Archstone Foundation -- hope that these recommendations will be used to develop, implement, and evaluate cost effective community-based Qi Gong and Tai Chi programs to leverage benefits for all ages.

The funding from the Archstone Foundation provided for:

- *The National Expert Meeting on Qi Gong and Tai Chi and preparation of the Consensus Document.*
- *Announcement of the Expert Meeting and release of the Consensus Document at the 2006 annual conference of the National Council on Aging/American Society on Aging in Anaheim, CA with a media event and press conference.*
- *Presentation of the meeting findings and the consensus report at three national symposia.*
- *The implementation of two demonstration projects based on the recommendations.*

What's Next?

As a part of this project, the National Blueprint Office will sponsor two community demonstration projects that will be charged with implementing a Qi Gong and Tai Chi program that is consistent with Expert Meeting consensus findings and recommendations.

Sample Qi Gong and Tai Chi Program Content and Structure

Course Content

- *Dynamic body movements* to promote balance, flexibility, strength, and range of motion while sitting, standing or walking.
- *Static standing postures* for balance and concentration.
- *Static sitting postures* for foundation to quiescent meditation
- *Breathing practices* to promote oxygenation, relaxation, and concentration.
- *Meditation practices* for concentration and focus, fostered by deep and/or controlled breathing.
- *Information about complementary and holistic health care* (e.g. nutrition, longevity or vitality enhancement and philosophies that promote inner peace).

Class Characteristics

- *Group activities provide ample opportunities for social interaction*
- *Fun and enjoyment stimulated by interesting practices.*
- *Quiet environment for optimal movement and meditation practice.*
- *Safe and supportive facilities to accommodate participants of differing physical activity levels*
- Ideally group programs should be offered 3 or more times per week for about 1 hour each session. However since many facilities schedule programs only once or twice a week, individual daily practice for at least 15-30 minutes is encouraged. Audio, video, and DVD programs for home practice may be helpful. Also certain populations will require briefer interventions or carefully modified practice settings for those with disabilities and limitations.

Principle Investigators

Wojtek Chodzko-Zajko, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Roger Jahnke, Institute of Integral Qigong and Tai Chi

Steering Committee

Lynn Beattie, National Council on Aging
Rita Chow, National Council on Aging
James Firman, National Council on Aging
Karl Rosengreen, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Roundtable Participants

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Sponsoring Organizations of the National Expert Meeting on Qi Gong and Tai Chi

The Healer Within Foundation provides programs and services to improve the health and wellness of diverse populations, through educational programs, health and wellness coaching and easy/accessible mind-body practice by empowering individuals, groups and institutions. The Healer Within Foundation's group based self-care plus the benefits of peer-based accountability help individuals, families and communities make informed decisions, make healthful lifestyle changes and take inspired actions

The **Archstone Foundation** is a private nonprofit grant making organization founded in 1985, whose mission is to contribute toward the preparation of society in meeting the needs of an aging population. Through grants, the Archstone Foundation supports direct services to the elderly, improves the training of health and other service providers, informs policy and decision makers, and develops model programs.

The National Blueprint Office at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign provides support and assistance to more than 50 national organizations that partner in the National Blueprint Initiative to promote physical activity among America's older adult population. The National Blueprint Office works to advance the goals of the Blueprint through various projects and strategic priorities involving organizations, government agencies, and companies that advocate healthy aging.

The **National Council on Aging** is a national network of organizations and individuals dedicated to improving the health and independence of older persons and increasing their continuing contributions to communities, society and future generations. Its 3800 members include senior centers, adult day service centers, area agencies on aging, faith congregations, senior housing facilities, employment services, and other consumer organizations.

The mission of the **Institute of Integral Qigong and Tai Chi** is to diffuse the benefits of Mind/Body Practice -- especially Qigong and Tai Chi -- by training teachers, conducting research, and educating the public. Traditional principles of health promotion and character building are carefully revered while creating accessible programming that allows benefits to reach all populations from children to seniors in faith-based institutions, businesses, social service agencies, hospitals, clinics, community centers, schools, the military, and the justice system.