

## T'ai Chi Chih®

### On the Medical Front

#### American Medical Association

"Described as 'meditation in motion,' T'ai Chi Chih has been found to improve balance, reduce risk of falls, reduce stress, and improve muscle tone. It is taught widely in health care institutions, self-help groups for survivors of life-threatening illnesses, retirement centers, recreation centers for older adults of persons with disabilities, educational institutions from grade school through college, prisons, and recreation programs sponsored by the YMCA and park districts." *AMA Cultural Competence Compendium, Section VII: Patient Support Materials*

A study of 2,328 elderly people in a program of general exercise showed that falls could be reduced by 13 percent, and that t'ai chi training was the most beneficial, reducing injuries by 25 percent, researchers reported on Wednesday, May 3, 1995 in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

#### Journal of Gerontological Nursing

"The results of this study add support to the use of t'ai chi as a form of exercise in older adults. In particular, it supports T'ai Chi Chih as a safe and enjoyable form of exercise that can be learned in a short period of time. The physiologic benefits indicate that TCC may be valuable as a method of improving and maintaining balance in high functioning older adults, and may be even more effective in elders with some degree of impaired functioning. TCC has several appealing

advantages over other forms of exercise. First, it does not require any special clothing or equipment and therefore is less expensive. Second, once the movements are learned, it can be practiced individually at home or in a group setting. Finally, the simple, soft, and fluid movements are ideal for elders regardless of previous exercise experience. *Journal of Gerontological Nursing, T'ai Chi Chih, An Exercise Option for Older Adults, Kevin J. Schaller, BSN, MSN, October 1996, 22(10), 12-17*

#### National Institute on Aging and the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine

According to an article published in the December '01 issue of the newsletter *Healthwise*, T'ai Chi Chih teacher Susan Haymaker is currently participating in a four year study funded by the National Institute on Aging and the National Center for Complementary Alternative Medicine, (both agencies of the National Institute of Health) which will examine the immunological effects of T'ai Chi Chih practice, particularly in relation to the disease Slingles, in seniors over 60 years of age.

This study, which follows a pilot study will involve 200 seniors. The control group will *not* be learning and practicing the T'ai Chi Chih movements — they will be educated on topics of health maintenance in discussion groups.

Haymaker taught the T'ai Chi Chih classes for the pilot study, and will again for the current study. The same researcher, Dr. Michael Irwin, formerly with the UCSD School of Medicine, and now the director of the Cousins Center for Psychoneuroimmunological Research at UCLA, is overseeing this study. He is quoted in the *Healthwise* article as saying, "I believe the

findings from this study will have implications for the care and treatment of older adults. The people at the National Institute for Aging think so too. . . . That's why they're funding this study." *News Shorts by Noel Altman, The Vital Force Journal March 2002.*

#### Kaiser Permanente

Last year Kaiser Permanente Complementary and Alternative Medicine Department produced a videoconference film on movement therapies. Featured on the video are four movement therapies, chosen from many classes offered through their health education department. I was asked to present the T'ai Chi Chih segment.

The video is being used in Northern California Kaiser Hospitals. Shown to doctors and nurses, it will educate them on various movement modalities, to help them suggest the appropriate one for their patients. . . . *News Shorts by Sandy McAlister, The Vital Force Journal March 2002.*

#### The Arthritis Foundation

The Arthritis Foundation believes that slow gentle movements build muscle strength without stressing the joints, improves balance, and relieves stress and depression. Exercise programs, such as T'ai Chi Chih, that embrace these principles can be beneficial for people with arthritis. *Statement issued by Kim Sammons Associate Vice President, Public Relations, The Arthritis Foundation.*

Among others, there is research from **Harvard's Women Studies, The Mayo Clinic, and on Parkinson's Disease.** If you would like further research, please contact your local T'ai Chi Chih instructor.