

Benefits of Tai Chi program to chronic disease prevention in Australia

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Background: There is increasing evidence that cardiovascular disease (CVD) is linked with a number of psychosocial risk factors and biophysiological risk factors such as metabolic syndrome (MetS). The development of effective community interventions, such as Tai Chi practice to modify high-risk lifestyles and behaviours and reduce psychosocial and biophysiological risk factors, is a promising primary health care approach to prevent CVD.

Aims and objectives: This study compared the difference between pre intervention and 12 months after the participants participated in the program in health-related quality of life (HRQoL) in 345 older people (aged 50+) who participated in community Tai Chi program. In addition, psychological distress and resilience, body mass index (BMI), systolic blood pressure (SBP) and diastolic blood pressure (DBP) were measured and assessed.

Methods: In 2012, a prospective intervention study was conducted to compare a group of community older people participating in a community-based meditation intervention program. Measures included the Short-Form 12 Health Survey (SF-12), General Health Questionnaire (GHQ30), Resilience Scale, BMI and blood pressure. Univariate Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used to compare the difference between pre intervention time and 12 months after they participated in the regular Tai Chi program when the data were collected.

Results: Outcomes differed in significance and magnitude across four HRQoL measures, psychological distress and resilience. The Tai Chi group also showed fewer incidences of being overweight, or suffering from obesity and psychological distress comparing the pre intervention time.

Conclusions: Regular and long term meditation exercises had a beneficial effect to HRQoL, reducing psychological distress, promoting resilience, manage and take an active role in managing the health condition, and reducing the BMI and blood pressure level in older people. Tai Chi program can reduce the prevalence of CVD related risk factors.