

Title:

Changes in self-reported symptoms of depression and physical wellbeing in healthy individuals following a Taiji beginner course – Results of a randomized controlled trial

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1 ABSTRACT

Background:

Taiji is a mind-body practice being increasingly investigated for its therapeutic benefits in a broad range of mental and physical conditions. The aim of the present study was to investigate potential preventive effects of Taiji practice in healthy individuals with regard to their depressive symptomatology and physical wellbeing.

Methods:

70 healthy Taiji novices (mean age 35.5 years) were randomly assigned to a Taiji intervention group, i.e. Taiji beginner course (Yang-Style Taiji, 2 hours per week, 12 weeks) or a waiting control group. Self-reported symptoms of depression (CES-D) and physical wellbeing (FEW-16) were assessed at baseline, at the end of the intervention, as well as two months later.

Results:

Physical wellbeing in the Taiji group significantly increased when comparing baseline to follow up (FEW-16 sum scale $T(27) = 3.94$, $p = .001$, 95% CI 0.17 to 0.55). Pearson's correlation coefficients displayed a strong negative relationship between self-reported symptoms of depression and physical wellbeing (p 's < 0.001 , r 's $\geq -.54$).

Conclusion:

In this randomized controlled trial we found significant evidence that a Taiji beginner course of three months duration elicits positive effects with respect to physical wellbeing in healthy individuals, with improvements pronouncing over time. Physical wellbeing was shown to have a strong relationship with depressive symptoms. Based on these results, the consideration of Taiji as one therapeutic option in the development of multimodal approaches in the prevention of depression seems justifiable.