

Committee 2
Holistic Medicine in Modern Health Care

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Chi Kung in Holistic Medicine and Modern Health Care

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Introduction

Indeed, modern medicine is at a crossroads. Not only modern medicine is expensive and many patients are dissatisfied with the treatment, modern medical professionals themselves are often apprehensive of the direction their current trend will lead. The range of so-called incurable diseases is alarming. These so-called incurable diseases are not just confined to degenerative organic disorders which have been a traditional problem in modern medicine, but now include infection, the overcoming of which was the hallmarks of modern medicine until recently.

Hence, both the general public and honest modern doctors are searching for alternative approaches to health and medical care. One holistic therapy or modality that I have found to work reliably is chi kung (spelt as "qigong" in Romanized Chinese). Chi kung is an art of energy management for health and vitality as well as mind expansion and spiritual cultivation, irrespective of one's religion. For health and vitality, which is the concern of this paper, chi kung is suitable for all patients! Understandably, this claim may astound many people, but its validity will soon be explained.

A Different Paradigm

Two cautions should be noted when researching or applying chi kung as a holistic therapy. The first caution, more potent than many people may realize, concerns perspective. Virtually all modern doctors view health and medical care from the perspective of conventional medical paradigm. They may be so accustomed to the western medical paradigm that they unconsciously regard this paradigm as the only correct one.

Consequently, they view alternative approaches from this western perspective, which often is not appropriate because these alternative approaches use paradigms vastly different from the western one. To ask which paradigm is correct, or superior, is irrelevant, as each paradigm is meant for its particular approach in healing and health care. But the crucial point is that if we wish to understand and benefit from a particular health care system, we have to use its paradigm.

A quick example will make this important point clearer. The healing and health care system I am presenting in this paper is chi kung, which has proven very effective for overcoming illness and promoting health. Personally I have helped many people to overcome so-called incurable illness, like asthma, cancer, chronic pain, diabetes, heart problems, sexual inadequacy, as well as depression and other psychiatric problems. The intriguing point is that irrespective of what kind of illness the patients may have, the same chi kung exercises help them overcome their illness! Of course, from the perspective of a western medical paradigm, this is impossible or non-

sensical. But from the perspective of chi kung, which uses the traditional Chinese medical paradigm, this is both meaningful and logical.

Space limitation does not permit a more detailed explanation of the Chinese medical paradigm here, but the following brief elucidation can clear the confusion. According to the Chinese medical system -- the one that has successfully maintained the health and sanity of the largest population of the world for the longest period of known history -- there is only one illness, although it has countless symptoms with different names, and this illness is called yin-yang disharmony. Happily, yin-yang harmony is the norm; yin-yang disharmony is abnormal.

Then, what causes the abnormality? It is disharmonious chi flow. Indeed, virtually all great medical scientists in the long history of Chinese medical literature have stated that if your chi, or vital energy, is flowing smoothly, you will not be sick in the first place. In familiar western terms, this means that if the energy that works your digestive system, waste-disposal system, feed-back system, immune system, defence system, regenerative system, and all the countless systems that keep you alive, is working the way it is supposed to work, no illness will ever happen.

Illness, irrespective of the labels we give its symptoms, occurs when one or more systems in the body fail to work naturally. Intermediate causes and symptoms of yin-yang disharmony are many and varied, but once we can restore the natural functioning of the body systems, which in Chinese terms is restoring harmonious chi flow, we can restore yin-yang harmony, irrespective of whether we know the intermediate causes and symptoms.

A manifestation of this cardinal principle, expressed in western terms, is as follows. We do not need to know the types or shapes of germs that have entered our body, or the kinds of carcinogens or radiation that cause cells to mutate; so long as our body systems work naturally, we will not experience infectious diseases or cancer. This actually is the case with every one of us everyday. The forte of chi kung is to restore and promote harmonious chi flow.

Emphasizing that yin-yang harmony is natural, this Chinese paradigm inspires and brings hope to thousands of people who have been under the delusion that their illness is incurable. As yin-yang disharmony is unnatural and therefore temporary, it can be rectified. According to the Chinese paradigm there is no such a thing as an incurable disease, although a patient may be incurable if his illness, even a simple one, has gone beyond a threshold. In other words, by restoring harmonious energy flow, chi kung is a therapy suitable for all kinds of diseases!

A Question of Authenticity

The second caution concerns the standard and sometimes the authenticity of the healing art being practised. For various reasons, the kind of chi kung being practised today has often become so diluted that it has virtually lost its essence. Chi kung literally means "energy work", indicating that for any practice or treatment to be called chi kung, the practitioner or healer must work on energy. But many who claim to practise chi kung or use chi kung for healing have little understanding and experience of energy flow.

Consequently, they work only on muscles and joints, and not on energy. Hence, although they perform external chi kung forms and call their practice chi kung, it is actually a form of gentle exercise because their practice benefits only their physical body. As they do not actively and consciously work on their energy, their practice cannot be called chi kung, which is an art of energy management

Today, because of the lack of proper control, practically anyone can claim to be a chi kung teacher or healer, even though he may not have undergone proper training. As the general public has little knowledge of chi kung, it is very difficult for people to differentiate bogus chi kung teachers and healers from genuine masters. Obviously, when doctors and research scientists work with these bogus teachers and healers, not only would results be unsatisfactory, they discourage further investigation into the genuine art.

Research

Chi kung has been known to be effective for overcoming both physical and psychological illness since ancient times. The *Huang Di Nei Jing*, considered by Chinese physicians as the most authoritative of Chinese medical texts, clearly states that illness is caused by disharmonious energy flow in heaven, earth or man.¹ This is a classical Chinese way of saying that a person becomes sick if he (or she) fails to adjust to changes brought about by various forms of energy

in the air (like germs), the environment (like weather) and human relationships (like emotions). If he can adjust accordingly, which in Chinese medical jargon is expressed as energy flow restoring yin-yang harmony, he needs not be sick at all.

Chao Yuan Fang, the Imperial Professor of Medicine who edited the first Chinese specialist book on pathology, *The Causes of Diseases*, in CE 610 recorded about four hundred types of chi kung exercises, and nothing else, to overcome 1270 different kinds of illness.² There were many classical Chinese books recording the effective use of chi kung for maintaining health and curing diseases.

In modern times, many researchers both inside and outside China have used modern scientific methods to verify the traditional claims of chi kung in health and medical care. Numerous experiments have shown that practising chi kung enhances the immune system. For example, researchers in Tientsin Chinese Medical Research Centre found that white blood cells increased from an average of 57.7 per cent to 78.1 per cent in people who had practised chi kung for three months.³ Researchers at Jiangsu Chinese Medical Research Centre found that antibody IgA had increased from 767.5 mg per cent to 1193.4 mg per cent after three months of practising chi kung. The amount of T-cells among chi kung practitioners was 74.9 per cent compared to 65.6 per cent in other people.⁴

There is actually no lack of modern research on chi kung using scientific methods. The

following are just a few random examples:

Experimental research on the neural mechanism of a chi kung state of mind.

Multi-information processing of EEG under the action of chi kung.

Effect induced by chi kung on hyperchronic nucleic acid solution.

Effect of chi kung on the reaction of free radicals.

Molecular-biological effects of emitted chi on man.

Effects of chi kung on stress responses.

Clinical efficacy and approach mechanism of eye-type chi kung to treat myopia.

Effect of chi kung on blood pressure and heart rate.

Effect of chi kung on malignant tumour.⁵

There are also a lot of scientifically controlled case studies on patients recovering from various diseases as a result of practising chi kung. The following is a random list of examples:

Clinical analysis on 22 case histories of the effects of chi kung on duodenum ulcers

A study on the recovery of hypertension patients using chi kung therapy

Preliminary report on the use of chi kung therapy on lung inflammation and mal-function

Report on 100 case histories of tuberculosis patients using a multiple-treatment programme with chi kung therapy as the main treatment

Preliminary survey of the experience of using chi kung to overcome sexual impotency

Report on 10 cases of chi kung treatment for nervousness

Preliminary report on 12 cases of chi kung treatment for structural heart problems

Observation of multiple-approach treatment with chi kung therapy as the main treatment
on 107 cases of severe asthma patients

Clinical analysis on symptoms of 100 patients practising chi kung

Preliminary observation of the influence of chi kung on the cardiovascular system

United report of chi kung therapy on 1278 cases of peptic ulcers

Analysis of the effects of chi kung and multiple treatment on 120 cases of poisoning
during
advanced pregnancy.⁶

Many research reports have been translated into English. The following examples are
taken from a list in the website of the Yan Xin Qigong Association of America.⁷

A Study on the Biophysical Basis of Qigong

The Effect of External Qi on the Liposome and Liquid Crystal Phase

Structure and Property Changes in Certain Materials Influenced by the External Qi of
Qigong

Ultra-Long Distance Effects of External Qi on the Protamine DNA Solution

An Experimental Study on Ultra-Long Distance (2,000 km) Effects of External Qi on the
Molecular Structure of Matter

Western scientists too have done much research on chi kung. For example, Dr Kenneth

Sancier, who won a special award for his work in the Second World Qigong Congress in 1997, provides the following reports.⁸

In "Qigong for Anti-Aging", Dr Sancier reviews clinical studies which show that qigong can improve the health of people suffering from different chronic medical problems which accelerate the aging process. The studies reveal that as indicated in hypertension and cancer, combining qigong and drugs is superior to using drug therapy alone.

In "The Effect of Qigong on Therapeutic Balancing Measured by Electroacupuncture According to Voll (EAV)", Dr Sancier reports that after practising chi kung, the average EAV measured values of four subjects were reduced in the range of -19 to -31%. In another series, chi kung exercise changed the average EAV measured values in the range of -17 to -35% for four subjects and 4 to 15% for three subjects.

In "Medical Application of Qigong" Dr Sancier says that clinical and experimental studies show chi kung exercise can beneficially affect many functions of the body and improve health. He points out that chi kung has diverse medical applications, that some studies were conducted in depth, and that many applications hold promise to improve western health care.

Researchers' Problems

There is therefore no lack of research done or of reference material. There are, nevertheless, three problems facing researchers. First, most of the research reports are written in Chinese and may present some difficulty to western researchers. Second, traditional Chinese chi kung masters encounter much difficulty reading these reports because they usually use western formats and unfamiliar concepts.

A third problem, more significant than obvious, is that using western concepts of modern scientific research is not the ideal approach to describe chi kung. We may have a clearer idea of this difficult situation if we use an analogy. Suppose you wish to describe the grammar of the Chinese language so as to understand it better. As you are familiar with English grammar, you plan to study Chinese in terms of nouns and verbs, spelling and conjugation. Imagine your bewilderment when a Chinese language expert tells you that in Chinese there are no nouns and verbs, no first person and third person, no singular and plural, no past tense and present tense, and no spelling! You would think that such a language is impossible. Yet that is what Chinese is, and it is a beautiful and effective language.

In the same way, a traditional chi kung master may tell you that one actually does not need to know the name or the cause of his illness; if he practises chi kung correctly his illness, irrespective of the label we may name its symptoms, will be overcome. This, of course, is ridiculous to those viewing health and medicine from the western medical paradigm. Those who are sympathetic may think it is too good to be true. Yet this is actually the case in chi kung, and

can be logically explained using the chi kung paradigm!

Proposed Research Procedure

I propose a research procedure that is in line with chi kung philosophy and practice, and also fulfils western scientific methods, though some scientists may not be comfortable with its lack of high-sounding terminology. The hallmarks are that this research procedure is simple, direct and effective.

The aim of the research is to examine how effectively practising chi kung can restore health in people who have been certified as unhealthy. Please note that this research is not interested in whether chi kung can overcome diseases x, y or z.

The procedure is briefly as follows. A group of medical scientists decide what qualifications constitute health. A group of 100 people who have failed this set of qualifications and are therefore considered unhealthy, undergo a programme of chi kung training with a chi kung master. These subjects may be suffering from a variety of diseases, which the chi kung master need not know. Four measurements are made on the subjects with direct reference to the set of qualifications for health, once before the training period, twice during the period, and once after the period. From these measurements we can work out quantitatively how effective or

otherwise can practising chi kung help unhealthy people regain their health. Further research can be carried out with more refinement on the procedure.

Standards

Given the present situation the question of standards presents a big problem. A brief explanation of its background will enable us to understand better why ensuring the quality and safety of this therapy can be problematic, and how we may overcome it. Throughout many centuries, chi kung was an elite art taught only to selected disciples who had to practise for many years before they were judged competent. Just about 50 years ago, the Chinese government actively promoted chi kung at a scale and pace unprecedented in history, because the government found chi kung to be an excellent way to overcome the health problems facing the huge Chinese population.

National, provincial and district committees were formed, and instructors were mass produced in a matter of months, when it would normally have taken many years in the past. These hastily trained instructors trained other instructors, who in turn further trained others. Soon, foreigners went to China, learned chi kung from these instructors and returned to teach in their own countries, often with a teacher's certificate after three months of study. This rapid spread of chi kung was good for China and the world; it enabled the public access to an art which for centuries was only accessible to an elite few. But with this goodness came a huge setback --

chi kung was drastically diluted, frequently to an extent where it lost its essence.

It is therefore not surprising that the great majority who practise chi kung today are performing it at a low level. When chi kung organizations are formed, it is this majority, not the rare masters, who are elected to positions of policy making. When government authorities or the general public, who usually cannot differentiate low level chi kung from high level, wish to know anything about chi kung, it is often these policy makers who provide the information. Hence, the de facto situation today is that while high level chi kung has great potential for effective health and medical care, what the general public meet is usually low level chi kung which may not give satisfactory results.

Professional Guideline

To overcome this difficult situation, the following proposal is made to serve as a legal or professional guideline to assure the public and the profession of the quality and safety of this modality. A board of certification could be elected by chi kung practitioners at national or international conferences. Appointment or election to this supreme council should be based on the candidates' performance and knowledge of chi kung, and not on their popularity.

The board of certification could draw up a feasible programme for the following three

major tasks: to educate the public what chi kung is and what benefits it can bring; to train instructors or therapists who can competently implement chi kung therapy; and to assess the effects of chi kung therapy in health and medical care. In educating the public, crucial points are to differentiate chi kung from gentle exercise, and to differentiate high level chi kung from low level chi kung. The training of instructors and therapists should be carried out in a five-year programme in universities, and the graduates have to practise in internships for two years before a post-graduate diploma be awarded granting them the right to professional practice. The assessment is to be carried out on the response of the public to chi kung, as well on the competency of instructors and therapists in helping patients overcome illness.

Apart from the usual constraints of cost, manpower and implementation, two factors would be problematic. One, chi kung is an umbrella term; there are many different types of chi kung. The board of certification might have difficulty agreeing to what types of chi kung should be taught. Two, even with legal backing it would be difficult as well as unfair to enforce its decision. Many chi kung instructors or therapists, both of a low level as well as the masters, would not want to be restricted by the decisions of this council. Nevertheless, this proposal would provide a conceptual framework upon which concrete steps can be taken according to the needs of the situations.

Medical Education

Medical education is essential. One main reason why the current standard of chi kung is low is the lack not only of medical education but of formal training among many of its practitioners. Almost any person can attend one or two weekend courses in chi kung, and start practising professionally. If such a trend is not checked, modern societies will lose an effective, viable health and medical care system that can overcome illness which conventional medicine often regards as "incurable".

The medical education of the practitioners should cover the following three areas, but not necessarily with the same importance:: Chinese medicine and chi kung, conventional medicine, medical systems of other countries and alternative healing systems.

The main part of chi kung medical education, of course, is on Chinese medicine and chi kung. Chi kung therapy is based on Chinese medical philosophy, which describes health as yin-yang harmony.

Yin and yang are symbolic terms. In the context of health and medicine, yin symbolises the ability of the body (and mind) to adjust to constantly changing environment; and yang symbolizes all factors -- both external and internal -- that may cause illness. For example, germs are symbolized by yang, and our immune system by yin. If harmful germs grow too much for the immune system of a person, he will be ill, and his illness symbolized as yin-yang disharmony is caused by excessive yang. On the other hand, the amount or potency of germs may remain the same but, for some reasons, if his immune system drops, he too will be ill. His illness then is

caused by insufficient yin.

As we all know, carcinogens are everywhere. Why then do we not all have cancer? This is because our bodies can by nature, and without our conscious knowing, overcome these cancer-causing agents. This is another example of yin-yang harmony, yin representing our body's adjustment and yang representing the cancer-causing agents. If, for some reasons, the yin adjustment in a person fails to contain the yang agents, cancer will surface as a clinical illness in him. Similarly, there are many factors that can cause psychological disorders, but by nature our yin adjustment can contain them. If, for some reasons, yin and yang become disharmonious, the person will be psychologically sick.

What is significant is that, according to this paradigm in relation to chi kung, we do not need to know the causes of yin-yang disharmony. As long as we can restore yin-yang harmony -- irrespective of the factors that first caused the disharmony -- we restore our health. This fact has great implications. Many diseases, including cancer and the common cold, are considered incurable in the conventional medical paradigm because conventional doctors do not know the causes of the diseases. From the chi kung perspective, this matter becomes irrelevant -- irrespective of whether the causes of cancer, the common cold or any so-called incurable disease are known, the patient will overcome his disease if his yin-yang harmony is restored!

What maintains yin-yang harmony? The answer is harmonious chi flow. If our chi, or energy, is flowing harmoniously, we shall be healthy -- and this is a natural phenomenon. In

familiar western terms, as long as the energy that works our heart, blood, digestive system, feedback system, and all our cells, tissues, muscles, organs and systems is working the way Nature makes it to work, we shall not be ill. Hence, a sick person can recover his health once he restores his harmonious chi flow, and the forte of chi kung is to ensure harmonious chi flow.

As the official medical systems of most countries in the world today use conventional western medicine, and the public as well as medical researchers generally view health and medicine from the conventional western paradigm, it is logical that an understanding of this system is necessary. While chi kung practitioners should also have some training in the application and interpretation of western medical instruments and methods, their study of conventional western medicine is mainly academic, and they must be fully made aware that they have no authority to practise it.

Medical systems of other countries like India and Arabia should also be studied generally to give the chi kung practitioners a wider perspective of different philosophies and methods in maintaining health and curing illness. Chi kung is often wrongly grouped together with New Age and alternative healing systems like crystals, radionics, or colour therapy. Chi kung is certainly not New Age; it has been successfully used for many centuries.. A basic understanding of these alternative healing systems as well as the established medical systems of other civilizations is useful information, but not appropriate to incorporate an ad hoc into chi kung practice -- as some alternative healers often do.

Public Awareness

As mentioned above, one major problem facing chi kung today concerns public awareness. The problem is not just to make the public aware of chi kung, but aware of high level chi kung. Chi kung publicity should cover the following three areas, which may be carried out progressively or simultaneously:

1. What chi kung is and what benefits chi kung can bring.
2. The difference between chi kung and gentle exercises that are often mistaken to be chi kung.
3. The difference between low level chi kung and high level chi kung.

One can derive many benefits from practising chi kung, but they can be generally classified into the following five categories: health, vitality, longevity, mind expansion, and spiritual development. These categories, while closely related, are quite different. For example, a person may not be sick but lack vitality, or may have longevity but not mental freshness, or may have good intellect but be lacking in spirit.

These benefits give chi kung an extraordinary and unique position in holistic medicine and modern health care. While most other medical and health care systems deal with only one dimension of man -- like conventional medicine deals with the physical body, psychology with emotions, meditation with mind -- chi kung deals with all of man's physical, emotional, intellectual

and spiritual dimensions in one beautiful scoop. And in the area of overcoming illness, not only is the chi kung approach holistic, it is also effective against so-called incurable diseases like asthma, diabetes and cancer.

Unfortunately, many people who say that they practise chi kung, do not get these wonderful benefits. The reason is simple -- actually they do not practise chi kung although they think they do; they merely practise some gentle physical exercise. What started as genuine chi kung has been so diluted that it has become some sort of gymnastics and dance. A look at Taijiquan (Tai Chi Chuan), with which most people are more familiar than with chi kung, will make the point clearer. Taijiquan is an internal martial art, but over the years it has been so ridiculously diluted that now there is nothing internal or martial in most of the Taijiquan practised today!

Naturally, if a person practises some gentle physical exercise, although he or his instructor may call it chi kung, he will only get the benefits of gentle physical exercise, like loosening muscles and joints and relaxation; he will not get the benefits of chi kung no matter for how long or hard he practises. The public therefore must be cautioned against mistaking gentle physical exercise for chi kung -- a mistake that is quite widespread nowadays. They must also be cautioned that while they may learn gentle physical exercise from books or videos, or from anyone who knows the physical exercise, genuine chi kung, which is energy management, must be learnt from a master or a competent instructor.

The crucial difference between gentle physical exercise and chi kung is as follows. Gentle physical exercise works on joints and muscles, whereas chi kung works on energy. When a person practises chi kung, he manages his energy flow for health, vitality, mind expansion or spiritual development. How does one know whether he is working on his energy? He will know if he practises genuine chi kung, in the same way as one who walks knows that he walks, or one who eats an orange knows that he eats an orange. In other words, if a person has to ask whether he is working on energy, it is a clear indication that he is not practising chi kung.

For convenience we may classify chi kung into two broad groups -- low level and high level. This division is arbitrary, and much chi kung is somewhere in between. Nevertheless, it provides us with a good working model to help us get more benefits from our practice. Low level chi kung produces mediocre results, while high level chi kung produces results that are remarkable, sometimes considered as miraculous by the uninitiated. For example, after practising chi kung for a few months, people suffering from, say, depression or diabetes find that their conditions have improved noticeably and they need less medication. Theirs is low level chi kung. If after a few months of practice, they can throw away their medication, work and play in high spirits, and enjoy cake and chocolate without problems, they have practised high level chi kung.

There are many factors distinguishing low level and high level chi kung. One important factor concerns how a chi kung practitioner works on his energy. If he works on his energy by way of his bodily movements, his chi kung is likely to be low level. If he does so by way of his

mind, it is likely to be high level. Low level chi kung can be learnt from an instructor, but high level chi kung should be learnt from a master. One who has gone through a five-year chi kung programme in a university as described above, and passed the two-year probation period of supervised teaching, might become a master.

Cost-Effectiveness

Chi kung is probably the most cost-effective of the various medical systems. Several good reasons justify this claim.

Once a person has learnt it, chi kung is free. He can practise it almost anywhere he likes -- no necessity of travelling to a medical centre; and there is no need for any apparatus -- no expensive machines to buy and maintain.

In many medical systems, diagnosis is important and sometimes expensive. Faulty diagnosis not only causes time and money, but sometimes complications. It is also not uncommon for surgeons to operate on a patient to examine, then discover that the operation is not necessary.

It would sound ridiculous to those trained in the conventional medical paradigm, but from chi kung philosophy and practice, diagnosis is not even necessary!

This is because at the most fundamental level where chi kung operates, there is only one variable, namely whether energy is flowing harmoniously. In familiar western terms, this means if the exchange of energy in a cell is harmonious, the cell will be healthy. Healthy cells form healthy tissues, which in turn form healthy organs. When all the cells, tissues and organs are healthy, the body systems work naturally, and the person will not be sick. Hence, while other medical systems diagnose at more complex levels, such as asking what necessary chemicals are not found in which glands, which organs are infected, or what systems are not functioning normally, chi kung works at the most fundamental level of energy flow. Chi kung is extremely cost-effective as there is no wasted effort.

Another aspect of cost-effectiveness concerns holism. Chi kung therapy, following a cardinal principle of Chinese medical philosophy, aims at restoring the health of a person, not just curing his disease. Although they may appear similar, restoring health and curing disease are crucially different. For example, some patients are told that there is nothing clinically wrong with them, although they and their doctors know that they are not healthy. Not infrequently, after a disease is cured, another disease develops. In both examples, health has not been restored. In this aspect, chi kung is cost-effective; it does not focus on curing individual diseases, it is concerned with making the practitioner holistically healthy.

Summary

Chi kung is an excellent answer to the urgent problems of degenerative diseases and psychological disorders facing today's modern societies. In Chinese medical philosophy, the task of the therapist is not to cure disease but to restore the patient's health, which is expressed as yin-yang harmony. Yin-yang harmony, which is natural, is sustained by harmonious energy flow. The main function of chi kung is to ensure harmonious energy flow. Once harmonious energy flow is maintained, health is restored. Personally I have helped many people to restore their harmonious energy flow, thus overcoming degenerative and psychological problems like asthma, cancer, cardiovascular disorders, diabetes, depression, anxiety and sexual impotency. Other chi kung masters also have remarkable results.

Nevertheless, two cautions should be noted. If we wish to understand chi kung and benefit from it, we should approach it using its own paradigm. This is only sensible, but sometimes when we have been so accustomed to one paradigm, such as the western medical paradigm, we may forget to make the necessary paradigm shift. If we view chi kung from its own paradigm, instead of forcing a foreign paradigm upon it, we shall not be puzzled why it can overcome so-called incurable diseases.

The second caution concerns the authenticity of the art or its practitioners. For various reasons, much of chi kung has been so drastically diluted that it has become some sort of

gymnastics or dance, and no longer an art of energy management. Naturally, such a diluted version may give the benefits of gymnastics or dance, but not of chi kung.

The wonderful benefits of chi kung have been known since ancient times. In our modern period, many researchers have applied scientific methods on chi kung, and their findings verify the claims of chi kung masters. Most of the reports are written in Chinese, but many have been translated into English. Some research is also done by western scientists themselves.

Because of the lack of control, the standard of chi kung practised today all over the world is low. A situation where masters are rare and mediocre practitioners plentiful is found in every other art, but it presents insidious problems in chi kung because the general public usually cannot differentiate between a master and a mediocre practitioner. The problems are aggravated when mediocre practitioners sit in influential committees whose information on the art is often taken as authoritative.

One major factor contributing to the low standard of chi kung today is that many instructors or therapists are not properly trained. It is proposed that a five-year training programme in a university followed by two years of practical work under supervision be conducted for aspiring instructors or therapists.

The public should be made aware that gentle physical exercise which is frequently and naïvely practised as chi kung, is not chi kung. They should also differentiate between high level chi kung and low level chi kung.

Chi kung is perhaps the most cost-effective among the many therapies or modalities practised today. It does not need expensive instruments, has no wastage, and benefits the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual dimensions of the practitioner. It has great potential to be the choice modality for holistic health in the future, and this Conference may well be a step in this direction.

Endnotes

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