Qigong and fibromyalgia: Effects of standardized and extended practice regimens

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Qigong, which has a long history in China as a health and wellness practice, is currently considered as “meditative movement”. In Halifax, we have conducted several trials with Chaoyi Fanhuan Qigong for fibromyalgia: a randomized-controlled trial (RCT) (N=100) and an extension trial (N=20) (with standardized regimens for 8 weeks, follow-up 6 months), and reported individual cases (N=2) who undertook extended community-based practice (1-3 years). In the RCT, subjects were randomly assigned to immediate practice, or wait list/delayed practice groups. Training consisted of 3 half-day sessions, with weekly review and practice sessions for 8 weeks; participants were expected to practice daily for 45 mins during this time. Pain, sleep, impact, and physical and mental function were determined at baseline, at 8 weeks, and at 3 and 6 months. In the immediate practice group, there were significant benefits in all outcomes at 8 weeks compared to the wait-list group, and benefits were maintained at follow-up. In the delayed practice group, similar results were observed, demonstrating reproducibility between two cohorts. Benefits in all areas were related to amount of practice. Qualitative data recapitulated quantitative results, and revealed some further health benefits. In the extension trial, further benefit occurred and health gains were consolidated (e.g. improvements in asthma, food and chemical sensitivities, vision). In individuals who practiced 1-3 years, pain, sleep, and physical and mental function were vastly improved, and there were additional health gains in other areas. Qigong, when practiced diligently, produces marked health benefits in those with fibromyalgia.

Biography

Jana Sawynok has a PhD in Pharmacology, and has been particularly interested in developing novel analgesics (adenosine-based therapeutics, topical analgesics). Since 2000, she has also been interested in Complementary and Alternative Medicine, with applications in chronic pain. She has published 180 papers in reputed journals, including 8 publications on qigong. She currently supervises (in collaboration with Mary Lynch, MD) medical students conducting pragmatic observational trials of qigong in the context of self-care at a tertiary pain care setting.

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