Tai-Chi and Baduanjin during treatment and rehabilitation of older adults with COVID-19

LETTER TO EDITOR

To the Editor,

In the COVID-19 outbreak, older adults have a higher infection rate because of their weak immune system. Tai-Chi and Baduanjin are common Qigong exercises that combined deep breathing and relaxation with flowing movements to improve respiratory muscles, whole-body movement, and mental rehabilitation.

Tai-Chi is a low-to-moderate intensity mind-body exercise for the treatment and prevention of infectious diseases. During the rehabilitation stage, Tai-Chi can minimise negative COVID-19 symptoms, including fever, asthenia, and cough, as well as shorten the hospitalisation time.¹ Baduanjin combined with Chinese medicine increases the treatment and rehabilitation rates to higher than 87.5%.² Practising Tai-Chi and Baduanjin can relax and change respiratory movement, rhythm, and pattern, and can restore the *Qi* (energy) in the body and move it to different internal organs such as the lung and spleen through meridians for better functions to enhance the immune system called 'defensive Wei Qi'. Therefore, practising Tai-Chi and Baduanjin can prevent and combat the virus invasion and its immunosuppression and cytokine storm syndromes.

The levels of IgA and IgG increase and the onset time of an upper respiratory tract infection shortened after 6 months training of Tai-Chi.³ Longer Tai-Chi exercise time significantly increased the levels of IgA, IgG, and IgM in the blood that enhance the immune system.⁴ The cell-mediated immunity was stronger after 25 weeks of practising Tai-Chi,⁵ and the response of antibody increased.⁶

Baduanjin is easier to learn for older people. It was reported that in older people the percentage of CD4, CD4/CD8, and NK cells increased and the immune system strengthened after 24 weeks of practising Baduanjin.⁷ The risk of respiratory tract infection

was lowered by systematic exercise.⁸ Lung function such as forced expiratory volume in 1 s, forced vital capacity rate of 1s, and arterial blood gas analysis improved for bronchitis patients after practising Baduanjin.⁹ Tai-Chi and Baduanjin are effective for older people during the treatment and rehabilitation stages of COVID-19 to promote recovery of the immune system.

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