

TAI CHI RESEARCH

Brian Corless*

Most instructors teach Tai Chi from a general health and fitness perspective rather than seeking to cure chronic illnesses. Nevertheless, during the past 20 years, there have been over 2,000 articles published recommending Tai Chi as beneficial for tempering the effects of chronic illnesses such as diabetes, arthritis and lower back pain. However Tai Chi is not a "magic pill" to be taken for every chronic health problem and we need to update ourselves on what research evidence says about its benefits for conditions of this kind.

A September 2020, an umbrella review published in *The American Journal of Medicine* by an international group of researchers, may be of interest to TCAA members. It summarised analyses of randomised control trials (RCT's) providing evidence supporting the positive influence of Tai Chi in a range of chronic illnesses.

Conducting a Tai Chi program targeting a particular chronic illness requires some background medical knowledge about safety aspects and the risks of prescribing exercise (including Tai Chi) for that particular illness. When teaching Tai Chi for medical purposes I therefore recommend that Tai Chi instructors work together with health professionals to provide a safe, low risk program for the public.

In future, organisations such as the International Medical Tai Chi and Qigong Associations may be able to set minimum standards of training in health knowledge for Tai Chi instructors. Meanwhile access to the Journal article is available via the TCAA Website.

** Brian Corless is a retired Clinical Psychologist, former Exercise Physiologist and TCAA member.*

Published in TCAA Newsletter November 2020.