

Author's Accepted Manuscript

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REDUCE FALL RATE COMPARED TO
LOWER EXTREMITY TRAINING IN OLDER
ADULTS WITH HISTORY OF FALLS

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PII: S1550-8307(16)30176-8

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.explore.2016.10.015>

Reference: JSCH2158

To appear in: *Explore: The Journal of Science and Healing*

Cite this article as: Richard Glickman-Simon, HOME-BASED TAI CHI CHUAN MAY REDUCE FALL RATE COMPARED TO LOWER EXTREMITY TRAINING IN OLDER ADULTS WITH HISTORY OF FALLS, *Explore: The Journal of Science and Healing*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.explore.2016.10.015>

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SECTION HEAD: Evidence-based Integrative Medicine Updates

Home-based Tai Chi Chuan May Reduce Fall Rate Compared to Lower Extremity Training in Older Adults with History of Falls

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Level 2 [mid-level] evidence

J Am Geriatr Soc 2016 Mar;64(3):518

Falls are the leading cause of injury in older adults. Thirty percent of community-dwellers over 65 fall each year.¹ Roughly 6% suffers a non-fatal injury due to a fall annually (10% of which are fractures), and 58 per 100,000 die of their injuries.^{1,2} The US Preventive Services Task Force recommends exercise or physical therapy for community-dwelling elderly individuals at risk for falling.³ Risk factors include older age, history of previous falls or mobility problems, and the results of a timed Get-Up-And-Go test.^{4,5} Tai chi chuan (TCC) is a multicomponent, mind-body practice originating in ancient China. It combines meditation with slow, gentle, graceful movements; deep breathing; and relaxation.⁶ While there is some evidence that TCC reduces the risk of falls, not all trials are in agreement, and the results of the few studies that directly compare the effectiveness of TCC vs. conventional exercise training have been inconsistent.^{7,8}

In the present Taiwanese study, researchers recruited 456 patients \geq 60 years-old (mean age 72.4) who visited an emergency department for evaluation of a fall-related injury at least 6 months previously and who could now independently ambulate.¹⁰ They randomized the participants to receive 24 weekly sessions of either TCC or conventional lower extremity exercise training (LET). Both 60-min interventions were conducted at home or at a nearby park or community center. Participants were asked to practice their respective interventions daily between sessions and after the end of 6 months for an additional year. Yang-style TCC

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