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Contributions Concerning the Application of the Means Specific to Qigong to Sedentary Adults

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Abstract

Sedentariness is an increasingly frequent phenomenon among adults. The prolonged lack of physical exercise leads to a decrease in the body's functional capacity and in the quality of life. Qigong is an adaptable and comprehensive form of physical exercise borrowed from Chinese culture. The paper explores the effects of practicing Qigong gymnastics by a group of sedentary adults over a 3 month period. The experimental group (33 subjects) practiced Qigong, while the control group (20 subjects) practiced body-building. Weight, body-mass index, the static balance Stork test and the Ruffier index were all evaluated.

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Keywords: Qi Gong, sedentariness, profilactic physical exercise, continuous physical education;

1. Introduction

Sedentariness is more and more present in the life of most adults living in the urban area. The lack of regular physical exercise leads to a continuous decrease in fitness and quality of life. In time, sedentariness was shown to favour the apparition of many non-communicable diseases, such as diabetes, obesity, even certain types of cancer.

Qigong is a system of physical exercise, breathing techniques and visualization patterns originating from ancient China, which could be an alternative for the physical education of sedentary adults.

2. Body

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2.1. *Sedentariness and its implications on the human body*

Sedentariness is a phenomenon showing an ascending trend in present times. Due to multiple and fast changes in the social and professional lives of contemporary adults, the necessary stimulation of the major body structures and functions through physical exercise has diminished substantially, up to the point where the lack of regular physical exercise has become a major health hazard.

Sedentariness represents:

- a decrease in the quantity and quality of the physical exercise performed regularly, which leads to a decrease in the homeostatic parameters in a healthy individual, favoring a higher degree of vulnerability towards the environment conditions;
- a lifestyle from which physical exercise is partially or completely absent. Such a lifestyle usually also presents other modifications, like bad eating habits, insufficient rest, etc.

The advances in technology, the increasingly accessible services and functions of the modern society, the predominance of the workplaces with a strong intellectual component and lack of physical stimulation, have all lead to a decrease in the amount and intensity of physical stimulation, ranging from the activities of daily living to the recreational activities.

According to Bernstein et al.(1999), a sedentary individual is an individual who spends less than 10% of his daily energy in physical activities of medium or high intensity (activities that elevate the basal metabolic rate at least 4 times).

Another frequently used definition states that a sedentary individual is an individual who fails to perform at least 30 minutes of physical exercise of medium or high intensity in most days of the week.

As far as consequences go, sedentariness is recognized as an important risk factor for many non-communicable diseases (NCD). Rabaeus (2005) states that the lack of physical exercise is directly involved in favouring diseases such as: diabetes, obesity, atherosclerosis, ischemic heart conditions and certain types of cancer.

Sedentariness can be associated frequently with maintaining fixed positions (especially sitting) throughout the day, irregular and unhealthy eating, insufficient rest and intellectual overwork.

The present study shows the impact of the Qigong Chinese gymnastics system when performed as a regular exercise by sedentary adults, compared to body-building, which is frequently used as a tool in the adult's continuous physical education.

2.2. *The Qigong system*

Qigong is a complex discipline, encompassing physical exercise, breathing techniques, visualization and meditation techniques invented and developed in China. It is a very vast domain, with many schools, due to the development in different regions and under different influences. Generally speaking, Qigong is a prophylactic and/or therapeutic means of protecting one's health using physical exercise. Since the Chinese cosmology and philosophy played and continues to play a decisive role in the creation and evolution of this method, terms like "chi" or "yin-yang", are frequently used.

The term "chi", roughly translated as "vital energy" is, according to the Chinese, the substratum of the whole life. This energy manifests itself in the entire Universe, from the brightest star to the smallest particle. In the human body, according to the principles of the Chinese Traditional Medicine, it flows along the acupuncture meridians, nourishing the organs and tissues. When this type of energy flows well, the body is healthy and strong. When the chi is in excess, weak or blocked, the body becomes vulnerable to disease. When the flow of chi stops completely, the individual dies.

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