

Changes in self-reported symptoms of depression and physical wellbeing in healthy individuals following a Taiji beginner course

A randomized controlled trial

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Background

Taiji as a meditative Chinese mind-body practice has received considerable attention in western societies. It is traditionally attributed a multitude of health-enhancing properties. In the meanwhile, solid evidence supports these claims.

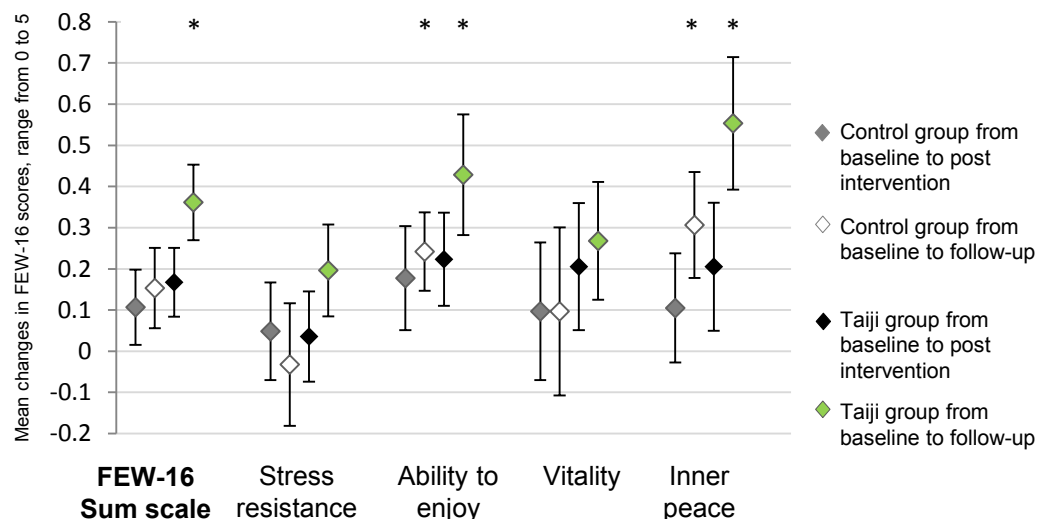
The aim of the present study was to investigate potential preventive effects of Taiji practice in healthy individuals with regard to depressive symptomatology and physical wellbeing.



Methods

70 healthy Taiji novices (mean age 35.5 years, one third male) were randomly assigned to a Taiji intervention group, i.e. Taiji beginner course (Yang-Style Taiji, 2 hours per week, 12 weeks), or a waiting control group. Self-reported symptoms of depression (CES-D) and physical wellbeing (FEW-16) were assessed at baseline, at the end of the intervention, and at follow-up after two months.

Figure 1: Development of self-attributed physical wellbeing: FEW-16 in Taiji group and control group. Values are means \pm standard error of the mean (SEM) and refer to paired sample *t*-tests. Positive values indicate increased wellbeing. Significance is indicated by an asterisk ($p < 0.05$).



Results

Symptoms of depression did not change significantly within the groups.

Physical wellbeing significantly increased in the Taiji group when comparing baseline to follow up (FEW-16 sum scale $T(27) = 3.94$, $p = 0.001$, 95% CI 0.17 to 0.55, compare figure 1).

Pearson's' correlation coefficients displayed a strong negative relationship between self-reported symptoms of depression and physical wellbeing in both study groups (p 's < 0.001 , r 's ≥ -0.54).

Conclusion

Already three months of Taiji-training elicit positive effects with respect to physical wellbeing in healthy individuals, with improvements pronouncing over time. Physical wellbeing was shown to have a strong inverse relationship with depressive symptoms. Based on these results, the consideration of Taiji as a possible therapeutic strategy in the development of multimodal approaches in the prevention of depression seems justifiable.

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