

# BLACK BELT

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## THE HEALING POWERS OF

### Ancient Art Can Cure Many Maladies

Ever since President Richard Nixon's historic journey behind the Bamboo Curtain, much attention has been focused throughout the Western world on the traditional healing arts of ancient China. What had previously been scoffed at as superstitious quackery by Western doctors and scientists, has now gained recognition as a bona fide system of medicine.

Acupuncture was the first medical technique of the Middle Kingdom to arouse the interest of Western health professionals. But acupuncture is not the only weapon against disease in traditional Chinese medicine. Other treatments include herbal remedies, moxibustion, massage, acupressure, respiratory therapy (*chi kung*), and medical gymnastics. Furthermore, acupuncture is usually employed only after other treatments have failed. The most widely used treatment in Chinese medicine is therapeutic exercise.

#### Theory of Chinese Medicine

The Chinese contend that many illnesses are caused by internal weakness. They believe that if this weakness is corrected through proper exercise, there is no place for sickness. Toward this end, they have devised numerous systems of medical gymnastics. Of these, the Chinese martial/healing art *tai chi chuan* is considered the optimum therapeutic exercise.

#### Curative Powers of Tai Chi Chuan

The healing powers of tai chi chuan are numerous and legendary. There is an ancient claim that tai chi can ward off 640 different maladies. Among the ailments it is reputed to heal are hypertension, gastric disturbances, neurasthenia, heart disease, tuberculosis, impotency, gastric ulcers, dysmenorrhea, nervous tension, rheumatism, arthritis, asthma, hemorrhoids, arteriosclerosis, and bronchitis.

Aside from its curative value, tai

chi chuan is also a valuable

form of preventative medicine. Regular practice of tai chi is beneficial to the body's nervous, digestive, respiratory, circulatory and glandular systems, as well as joints and muscles. Furthermore, recent research conducted in the People's Republic of China indicates there is a significantly lower incidence of heart disease, arteriosclerosis, high blood pressure and deformities of the spinal column among tai chi practitioners.

Today, tai chi chuan is widely used in medical institutions throughout China. Many American physical therapists have also begun using tai chi to help rehabilitate their patients. It is even taught in some



## TAI CHI CHUAN

mental hospitals and drug rehabilitation centers. **by Frank Petrillo Jr.**

#### Case Histories

Yeung Chin-Shuen was stricken with tuberculosis at the age of 27. His condition was so severe that he was confined to bed for three years. At the urging of friends, he began to study tai chi chuan under Wu Chien-Chuan. He was cured a year later. Since then, Yeung has devoted several decades to the study of tai chi, and has trained under 11 masters. "I am still practicing tai chi daily, and I feel my vigor and my health are no weaker than when I was young," he notes in his foreword to Lee Ying-ang's book *Lee's Modified Tai Chi for Health*.

Dr. Fred M.A. Wu had been troubled by chronic digestive disorders and neurodermatitis, both of which stemmed from nervous tension. He was emaciated because of a loss of appetite, and was constantly catching colds.

After emigrating from China in 1947, Wu went from doctor to doctor without any results. Tranquilizers could not help him, nor could conventional forms of exercise, such as calisthenics, bowling, swimming, walking, and ball sports.

While visiting Hong Kong in 1964, Wu began to learn tai chi chuan from Lee Ying-ang, who taught the former his own modified form of this ancient art. After a month of faithful practice, all of Wu's problems disappeared.

"It has been a little over a year since I learned this new version of tai chi chuan, and I have not caught a cold," Wu marvels in the preface of *Lee's Modified Tai Chi for Health*. "I have gained close to 20 pounds and have never felt better in my life. It has given me greater mental powers and allowed me to approach my daily problems



with a new and lasting vigor. Furthermore, I have helped two American friends who have learned parts of the exercise. In one case, it reduced the blood pressure from 200 to 130 within six weeks. In the other, it relieved a long-standing hemorrhoidal condition and a chronic stiff neck in about two months."

The late tai chi chuan master Yearning K. Chen had been a weakling in his youth, but after learning tai chi, he became strong and healthy. Moreover, he taught the exercise to countless numbers of ill people who were able to recover from their maladies.

The late Y.T. Liu was another contemporary tai chi chuan instructor whose health was miraculously rebuilt through the art's practice. He took up tai chi at age 69 after he developed heart problems. Liu was cured two years later and continued his study of the discipline, teaching numerous students in the United States.

Dr. Yang Jwing Ming is another tai chi chuan exponent whose health has been greatly improved by regular practice of the art. For several years, Yang was troubled with a stomach disorder caused by malnutrition. When he was 16, he began to study

tai chi. Within six months, not only did his stomach problem improve, but so did his sinus condition. He has faithfully adhered to his tai chi regimen ever since.

The most convincing testimonial to the healing powers of tai chi chuan is the late grandmaster Cheng Man-Ching. Cheng contracted tuberculosis during his teens and his doctors informed him he would die at an early age. In desperation, he began to learn tai chi when he was 25 years old. Within six months of training, he stopped spitting blood, and after one year his coughing ceased. Cheng lived to be 75 and became Yang Cheng-fu's most outstanding pupil.

These case histories prove conclusively the efficacy of tai chi chuan as a health-building martial art. Although it is by no means a panacea, it can still cure or alleviate many conditions which Western medicine cannot effectively treat. Tai chi is truly one of China's most precious gifts to humanity. ✕

*About the author: Frank Petrillo Jr. is a South Ozone Park, New York-based freelance writer.*



Photos of Lee Ying-Arng from  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CPkGWNOINA4>  
 Unicorn Press Hong Kong