INTRODUCTION

- Fibromyalgia involves widespread body pain and is frequently accompanied by fatigue, and sleep and mood disturbances. Treatments include self-management techniques and pharmacotherapy, but patients often continue to suffer from pain and have diminished quality of life. Qigong refers to a class of traditional Chinese practices that facilitate the flow of qi (vital energy). Qigong involves body posture, movement, breathing and mind instruction leading to an optimal state of body-mind function, and has recently been designated as "meditative movement" [Larkey 2009].

- Recent trials demonstrate that qigong and tai chi offer therapeutic benefits in fibromyalgia over 4-6 months [Haak 2008, Wang 2010]. Earlier studies of qigong involved limited practice (1 hr/week) as part of an 8 week mind-body intervention [Astin 2003], an 8 week education/relaxation/qigong intervention [Creamer 2000], or a 12 week body awareness therapy [Mannerkorpi 2004] and reported modest benefit. In Halifax, a pilot trial of qigong for 9 weeks (45 mins/day) indicated reductions in pain and impact, and improvement in physical function to 6 months [Lynch 2009].

- The current study is a randomized controlled trial designed to compare the effects of self-practice of CFQ (Chaoyi Fanhuan Qigong) (45 mins daily, for 8 weeks) with a usual care control group over a 6 month interval.

METHODS

- N=100 participants (meeting American College of Rheumatology criteria for fibromyalgia) were assigned to an immediate training group or a wait list control group who continued with usual care
- Training involved 3 half-day sessions followed by 8 weekly review and practice sessions (90 min); participants practiced qigong for 45 min/day for those 8 weeks and were then encouraged to continue for 4-6 months. Outcome measures were numeric rating scale pain intensity, Fibromyalgia Impact Questionnaire, SF-36 Health Survey, Pittsburg Sleep Quality Index.
- After 6 months, the wait list group received training and formed a delayed practice group. This study design allows for two cohorts to be compared, as well as for considering outcomes in a larger combined treatment group.

RESULTS

Findings reported in this study indicate that self-practice of CFQ qigong leads to long-term beneficial effects in fibromyalgia in several core domains and may be a useful adjunct in the management of fibromyalgia. Participants who practiced for longer periods of time obtained greater benefits. Further study of the potential health benefits of qigong, both this and other forms, is warranted.

SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

There are significant and reproducible improvements in all domains in both the immediate and delayed practice groups

REFERENCES


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