

CASE REPORT

## A Case Study of Simultaneous Recovery from Multiple Physical Symptoms with Medical *Qigong* Therapy

KEVIN W. CHEN, Ph.D. MPH,<sup>1,2</sup> and FLOYD D. TURNER, Ph.D.<sup>2</sup>

### ABSTRACT

**Background:** It is well known that *qigong* practice is beneficial to human health, but it is less known, even in China, that *qigong* may also be an effective therapy to treat various diseases. This report documents the story of a 58-year-old Caucasian male patient with a series of chronic conditions, including high prostate-specific antigen (PSA) mark (but not a confirmed cancer), atrial septal defect, asthma, allergies, multiple injuries by an automobile accident, high blood pressure, and edema in legs. Can medical *qigong* help such a patient to cure multiple symptoms simultaneously?

**Method:** The intensive *qigong* workshop involved the training and practice of gathering *qi*, magnifying *qi* energy and using it for self-healing with visualization and guided imaginary; plus supervised energetic fasting. The patient practiced *qigong* 4-plus hours per day during intensive training, and approximately 1 to 2 hours daily thereafter. About 10 sessions of external *qi* healing were performed by a *qigong* master for his pain and systematic adjustment.

**Settings/Location:** The intensive medical *qigong* workshop took place in the World Institute for Self-Healing, Inc. (WISH) office at Middlesex, NJ; and the patient practiced *qigong* at home for the rest of time.

**Results:** After workshop and *qigong* therapy, the patient discontinued all medications (8 in total) and lost 35 pounds; his blood pressure dropped from 220/110 with medication to 120/75 without medication (in 2 weeks); pulse rate dropped from 88 beats per minute resting to 68 beats per minute in the mornings and 55 bpm in the evening; the edema in his legs went away; symptoms of asthma or allergies disappeared; PSA level dropped from 11 to 4 (normal), all without any medications.

**Conclusion:** This kind of simultaneous recovery from multiple “incurable” conditions and other documented successes cannot be explained by any known medical theories, and call for formal clinical trials to closely examine the *qigong* self-healing therapy.

### INTRODUCTION

*Qigong* (pronounced “chi kung”) is a general term for a large variety of traditional Chinese energy exercises and therapies. With more than 3000 years of recorded history, there have been thousand different *qigong* forms in China. Most *qigong* forms were not designed for treating or

curing disease, but for the purpose of maintaining health or spiritual cultivation (as religious *qigong* does). Although most *qigong* may bring health benefits to some degree, only medical *qigong* emphasizes the vital energy (*qi*) to help diagnose and take control of or eliminate illness or diseases, as well as prevent their onset. Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) postulates the existence of a subtle energy (*qi*) cir-

<sup>1</sup>University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, Piscataway, NJ.

<sup>2</sup>World Institute for Self-Healing, Inc., Middlesex, NJ.

culating throughout the body, and when *qi* is strengthened or balanced, it can improve health and ward off or slow the progress of disease. All TCM therapies—herbs, acupuncture, massage, cupping, diet and *qigong*—are based on this philosophy and perspective on human health. Today, millions of people in China and around the world practice *qigong* and use *qigong* to deal with various diseases ranging from hypertension to cancer (see a review by Sancier, 1996).

It is generally known that *qigong* practice is beneficial to human health and can prevent disease, however, it is less known, even in China, that *qigong* may also be an effective therapy to treat various diseases. Because all *qigong* are not the same, and it is an unfortunate fact that there are more forms of “fake” *qigong* without any real tradition than the genuine traditional *qigong* in the market for historical reason. Therefore, it is necessary for us to describe the form of *qigong* involved in this case. Taiji Five-Element Qigong is one of the 14 forms of medical *qigong* recommended by the Chinese government in 1998. Mr. Binhui He, the lineage holder of a secret Daoism *qigong* tradition, created this self-healing system in response to the fact that modern medicine failed to provide a cure for many chronic diseases, and that many drugs used to treat these diseases had negative long-term side-effects. This self-healing system includes two major forms of static meditation (*Jin Gong*—meditation without movement) and one standing form (*Zhan Zhuang Gong* or magnification—starting with a standing position, followed by possible spontaneous movements in response to the motivated *qi* flow). The core of the classic meditation in this *qigong* is a still form of meditation, involving guided imaginary to absorb energy from moon, sun, and five planets, cleansing the body from outside to inside and from head to feet with imaginary water, and an empty mind state or conversation with the sick locations. The entire classic meditation was recoded on an audio CD with instruction and music, which takes 60 minutes to complete, and students can practice daily as many times as they choose.

In 1994, the Chinese Society of Qigong Science appointed Mr. He as the director of the Qigong Anti-Cancer Research Center after discovering that patients with late-stage cancer had recovered completely by practicing this form of medical *qigong* alone without any other therapy. Mr. He then started formal clinical exploration of *qigong* anticancer therapy in the Qigong Anti-Cancer Research Center. Many patients with advanced cancer (many of whom were turned away by hospitals because of the lack of existent medical treatment at such a late stage) and other chronic diseases participated in Mr. He’s intensive medical *qigong* training. Most of these patients achieved significant short-term improvement in their health and/or a recovery from cancer through *qigong* practice alone. Furthermore, during the last 5 to 9 years, a large proportion of these patients have become cancer-free (Liao, 1997; Shen 1997). In an official assessment meeting held in 1996 by the Chinese govern-

ment, Chinese scholars and experts in medicine examined a number of the cancer cases and the results of scientific research with Taiji Five-Element Qigong. They affirmed the positive effect of the Five-Element Medical Qigong and concluded in their evaluation that it was “an effective way to treat cancer” (Huang, 1997; Zhang, 1997).

However, there are few well-documented cases of *qigong* therapy published in English literature (an exceptional example is Loh 1999), some speculate that the effectiveness of *qigong* therapy may be related to Chinese culture and lifestyle. Here, we would like to document a successful case of a Caucasian patient in the United States who experienced simultaneous recovery from multiple symptoms while practicing this form of medical *qigong* without other treatment. It is our hope that accumulated evidence like this will generate enough interest for researchers to conduct clinical trials with this powerful self-healing therapy.

## CASE DESCRIPTION

### Background

The patient is a 58-year-old male psychologist and resident of New Jersey, who has some acceptance of alternative therapy. He has used complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) therapies for 20 years in the treatment of his patients with cancer. Specifically, he has used a variation of the Simonton technique that involves the use of guided imagery. This prior experience made him more receptive to the use of CAM procedures for his own treatments.

The patient was born with an atrial septal defect (ASD), which was not detected until he was 47 years of age. The sequelae of this defect were asthma, allergies, and high blood pressure as he reached the age of 40. Further, he had gained approximately 80 pounds as his metabolism slowed. In addition, he had developed edema in his legs as a side-effect of the blood pressure medication. The ASD was repaired at the time of diagnosis by open-heart surgery. A surgical error resulted in hemiparalysis of his diaphragm further complicating the respiratory problems. In May 1999, he had a slightly elevated prostate-specific antigen (PSA) of 4.2. A biopsy was negative.

In July 2000, his car was struck in the rear by another vehicle while he was at a stop sign. This accident resulted in vertical vestibular nystagmus and tinnitus, and serious damage to the spine, shoulders, and knees. After his automobile accident, his blood pressure increased to 210/100 with medication (verapamil) and his cardiologist was reluctant to increase his medicine above the level at which he had been prescribed.

As part of the workup from the accident, the PSA was repeated and found to be 11, well above the normal range. While this measure may not be highly reliable or valid, his

urologist told him that an increase of 0.75 in any year is clinically significant: his result was almost 10 times that amount. The doctor recommended a biopsy, but he did not have the biopsy performed until after the *qigong* therapy and workshop, the biopsy was negative. Therefore, there has never been a confirmed diagnosis of prostate cancer despite the elevated PSA results.

### *Medical qigong intervention*

After the report of elevated PSA level in July 2000, the patient started to worry about his vulnerability to cancer because his family had a serious history of cancer. After he had heard about the anticancer *qigong* therapy from a colleague, he attended a 2-day workshop sponsored by the World Institute for Self-Healing, Inc. (WISH) in the fall of 2000. The workshop involved the training and practice of gathering *qi*, magnifying the energy and using it for self-healing with visualization and guided imagery. After the workshop, the PSA test was repeated and the PSA level dropped from 11 to 7. Six months later, in anticipation of repeating the PSA test, the patient had individual sessions with the *qigong* healer for external *qi* adjustment, the process by which, it is said that, *qigong* healer directed his *qi* energy to help others break *qi* blockages to induce the sick *qi* out of body so as to relieve pain, or balance the *qi* flow in the body and get rid of diseases. The PSA level dropped to 5.6 on the repeated test after these individual sessions. During these sessions, the patient was asked about his general health, and he described the multiple conditions listed above. The *qigong* healer suggested the patient to attend the coming 20-day intensive *qigong* anticancer seminar.

The intensive *qigong* anticancer seminar involved the intensive practice of the Five-Element Qigong (4-plus hours per day), collective *qi* adjustment by the *qigong* healer, and lectures on the significance of active participation in the healing process, with the addition of an ancient technique called *Bigu*, that means, literally, stop eating or energetic fasting. During this time, the practitioner was allowed to eat a maximum of 10 raw peanuts or 10 Chinese dates supplemented by mineral water for electrolytes per day. The *Bigu* process began after 7 days of the seminar with intensive *qigong* training and continued for 36 days. Food was reintroduced over the next 36 days: the first 12 days was a liquid diet, the second 12 days was a semiliquid diet, and the last 12 days was reduced food intake (75% of normal diet).

The *qigong* healer suggested that the patient discontinue all of his medications during *Bigu* (energetic fasting) to maximize the therapeutic effect. At that time, the patient was taking three cardiovascular medicines (verapamil, Lanoxin, and Coumadin [Bristol-Myers Squibb, Plainsboro, NJ]), four medicines for allergies and asthma (Claritin [Schering-Plough HealthCare Products, Inc., Berkeley Heights, NJ], Proventil [AmeriSource Health Service Corp., Columbus, OH], Serevent [Glaxo-SmithKline, Research Triangle Park,

NC], and Aerobid [Forest Laboratories, St. Louis, MO]), and one medicine for pain associated with the accident (Vioxx, Merck & Co., Whitehouse Station, NJ). He discontinued all medications, while carefully monitoring his pulse rate and blood pressure during the fast.

The patient continued his *qigong* practice on a daily basis (about 1 to 2 hours per day) after the intensive *qigong* seminar, and actively participated in promoting *qigong* as a self-healing method to fight against chronic conditions.

### *The outcome*

During the intensive *qigong* seminar, the patient lost 35 pounds. His blood pressure dropped from 220/110 with medication to 120/75 during the seminar without any medication (this occurred within 2 weeks). His pulse rate dropped from 88 beats per minute resting to 68 beats per minute in the mornings and 55 bpm in the evening after his regular work (seeing patients) continuing throughout the evening. The edema in his legs went away.

His allergy and asthma remitted even though the workshop was in the spring—the worst time of the year for an allergy patient. Finally, from the perspective of the cancer progress, the PSA level dropped to just above 4.0, which is a normal level (the standard error for PSA test is approximately 0.2, and any change of 0.5 is considered significant).

In addition, the pain associated with the automobile accident decreased greatly and there was improvement in the vertigo. There was intermittent improvement of the tinnitus.

The patient consulted with four of his physicians who had been following these medical problems. They were all amazed and pleased with the outcome and agreed that he did not need to continue taking the medications although cautioning that he should monitor his status because the problems might return. Three of them checked his lungs and noted that they were clear.

After the death of the patient's mother, his *qigong* practice was not as disciplined and his PSA level was tested at 12 again. After an individual session with the *qigong* healer (external *qi* healing) and a 6-day intensive workshop accompanied by *Bigu*, his PSA level dropped to 9.9. Two months later with continuous *qigong* practice, another test showed the PSA level had dropped to 4 (within normal range, which was the latest test result). His urologist could not explain this result in terms of traditional medicine.

## DISCUSSION

Although the patient's original motive for participating in the intensive *qigong* practice was to lower his elevated PSA level, the outcome of the intensive *qigong* training was really much better than he had expected—a complete recovery from multiple chronic symptoms. One of the unique characteristics of the current case is that most of his previ-

ous physical conditions were not curable by the known conventional medications or healing procedures, yet he achieved simultaneous recovery with Taiji Five-Element *qigong* therapy in a short period and stays medication-free for more than 2 years. None of his doctors can offer an explanation on the source of the simultaneous recovery from the multiple symptoms in such a short term.

It should be noticed that at no time did a biopsy reveal a diagnosis of prostate cancer despite the elevated PSA level, which might well be the results of increased stress and other unknown sources. However, the fact of PSA level went down without taking any medication was something interesting in this case.

There are similar case reports of simultaneous recovery of patients with cancer in Chinese literature with Taiji Five-Element Qigong therapy. For example, Ms. Liao, a high-school teacher from Liuzhou, recovered from recurrent breast cancer with postsurgery metastasis to bone using this form of *qigong* therapy alone. Not only her metastatic cancer was gone, but other chronic diseases she had previously suffered (before cancer), such as diabetes, prolapse of lumbar intervertebral disc, fatty liver, and so on, all disappeared without any medication (Liao, 1997). She has lived a healthy life for more than 9 years. Mr. Shen, 68, the formal vice principal of Shantou University, used the same *qigong* therapy to treat his reoccurring liver cancer after three failed surgeries. After 4 months of intensive *qigong* practice without any drugs or other therapies, his liver cancer disappeared completely; meanwhile, his hepatocirrhosis and hepatitis B disappeared as well without any medication (Shen, 1997).

Mechanisms behind simultaneous self-recovery from multiple chronic conditions using *qigong* therapy are not clear and need further studies. A review of Chinese literature has found that *qigong* practice is associated with improved immune functions, raised pain threshold, and increased microcirculation function (Chen and Yeung, 2002). These improvements in function might contribute to self-recovery from various chronic conditions, but do not explain the observed improvement and complete recovery in the currently reported case. We need to know more on how this therapy works for patients. A well-controlled clinical trial is needed to verify such a complicated simultaneous recovery.

Caution should be given when applying this self-healing therapy, especially with regard to the *Bigu* technique. *Bigu*

is a significant component of the Five-Element Qigong anticancer program. However, it could be dangerous to carry out this technique without the guidance and close supervision of an experienced *qigong* instructor or *qigong* healer. In addition, not all students in the same intensive *qigong* seminar achieved such a miraculous result. Not all forms of *qigong* are effective with cancer. Most popular forms of *qigong* in China are for the purpose of maintaining health and provide certain health benefits if one is persistent in practicing the technique. However, they were not developed for medical healing or treating cancer and other chronic conditions.

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Address reprint requests to:  
Kevin W. Chen, Ph.D., M.P.H.

Department of Psychiatry  
University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey  
Robert Wood Johnson Medical School  
671 Hoes Lane West, UBHC-D453  
Piscataway, NJ 08854

E-mail: chenke@umdnj.edu

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