



No lasting effect was shown, however, by week 12, which probably reflects the fact that the subjects did not continue the tai chi practice on their own and also went back to taking their ADHD medication, which could dilute a treatment effect, according to Dr. Pang.

At 12 weeks, the hyperactivity score was 44.25 in the tai chi group and 52.11 in the control group. The ADHD index subscores were 54.63 and 58.33, respectively. No group differences were observed at any time point for the conduct or cognitive subscales of the CWSS.

Half the group had a diagnosis of ADHD, and those who practiced tai chi also had an improvement on the cognitive problem subscale of the CWSS, she reported.

Because tai chi has no adverse effects and no significant costs, it is a potential economic alternative treatment modality, especially for patients intolerant of ADHD medications or those whose parents object to the use of medications, or as a way to maintain a relative steady state during medication vacations, Dr. Pang suggested.

Mike Brody, MD, a Maryland psychiatrist who is author of *Messages: Self-Help Through Popular Culture*, commented to *Medscape Psychiatry* that the effect of tai chi chuan may simply be through its ability to "focus" the adolescents. Dr. Brody is an APA liaison with the American Academy of Pediatrics.

"Tai chi is good, but I believe that any type of activity that serves to regulate, that provides discipline — such as dance, chorale, karate, even baseball — should improve ADHD," he said. "I believe strongly that any disciplined activity, if it helps a child focus, will help this disorder." In addition, he suggested that other aspects of the activity, such as the extra attention the children received, could also be influential.

David Fassler, MD, clinical professor of psychiatry at the University of Vermont, Burlington, also commented, "This is an interesting pilot study suggesting that tai chi chuan may have a positive impact on the overall symptoms of ADHD in adolescents. Other studies have reported similar findings for judo and for increased exercise, in general.

"Although such activities may be helpful components of treatment for particular patients, the results of the current study do not imply that they should be used in lieu of more established interventions. I would agree with the authors' suggestion that further research is warranted to better understand the potential use of tai chi in the treatment of adolescents with psychiatric disorders."

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