

The Medical Use of Qigong in China

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Introduction

Huaxia Zhineng Qigong Clinic & Training Center lies on the northeast coast of China, five hours by train from Beijing. The Center houses over 3,000 patients and a staff of 600, including 26 Western trained doctors. Many patients—called “students” at the Center—come diagnosed as incurable or terminally ill by Western trained doctors. Yet in the period 1988-95, of the 130,000 students who attended the Center, 95% recovered.¹

The Center is the only hospital in the world that relies exclusively on a form of therapy called “qigong.”² This type of therapy involves a series of gentle movements designed to stimulate the flow of energy, or “qi,” through the body.

From a Western perspective, the Center’s success rate is both remarkable and puzzling. Has the Center discovered a new form of medicine? Or can the results be due to a form of faith healing with a few exercises thrown in?

Taber’s Medical Dictionary defines “faith healing” as

healing accomplished by supplication to a divine being or power without medical or chemical aid. Although this area is open to fraudulent practice, the medical community cannot completely ignore the psychosomatic aspects of illness that may be affected in this manner.

To learn more about the Center and answer the question of faith healing, I studied over one hundred interviews with former and current students of the Center.³ From these interviews certain themes and facts emerged, which will be discussed in the following sections.

About the author

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¹ The 95% breaks down as follows: 42% noticeable improvement; 38% great improvement, with near disappearance of symptoms; 15% complete cure. A total of 180 different diseases were treated. All cases are documented with M.D. diagnosis and relevant test results.

² The type of qigong practiced at the center is called “Zhineng Qigong”, as will be discussed presently. In America, Zhineng Qigong has been renamed “Chi LeI”, presumably for ease of pronunciation. In this paper, the term “Zhineng Qigong” is used throughout, to avoid confusion. Note that the Chinese word “qi” is pronounced “chee”.

³ as published by Luke Chan in *101 Miracles of Natural Healing*, (Cincinnati: Benefactor Press, 1996). Available on-line from www.chilel.com

The Road To Healing

An Open Mind

The first step for a student of the Center is the decision to try something out of the ordinary. Qigong therapy is unconventional, even by Chinese standards. “When a friend suggested we try Zhineng Qigong,” says Jing Shan, a man of 46, “we were in no mood to listen. If all these prestigious hospitals with all their experts couldn’t cure our son, what could Zhineng Qigong do? I thanked our friend, but dismissed his idea as wishful thinking and an attempt to comfort us.”

Jing’s son suffered from a benign upper lip tumor, which had grown to the point that it nearly blocked his nose. The location of the tumor made surgery impossible. Doctors predicted the boy had six months to live.

“My friend, who was a Zhineng Qigong practitioner, kept on encouraging me to take the self-healing art, saying, ‘What if Zhineng Qigong works? You owe it to your son to try it.’ My friend’s sincerity and unwavering belief in Zhineng Qigong gradually softened my heart and finally dispelled any last hope I had in modern medication. Embracing Zhineng Qigong as the only hope of curing my son’s condition, I brought him to the Center.”

After twenty four days of practicing qigong at the Center, the boy was able to stop the tumor’s growth, and it even started to shrink. In the next few weeks it disappeared altogether.

Yu Tian-Ming, 40, a former electrician who was accidentally electrocuted, came to the Center “a deeply skeptical person.” He remembers: “When I saw Lao-shi [the Center’s director] helping people to walk, talk, and see, I dismissed it as mass hysteria. When people talked about their miraculous recoveries, I thought they were either exaggerating or that their recoveries could have happened anywhere.”

Yu suffered from a feeling that he was always half-asleep, in a twilight state of consciousness. Also, his knees were so stiff that walking was difficult, and his throat hurt each time he swallowed food.

At the Center, Yu completely recovered his health. Nevertheless, he remained skeptical. “I don’t know exactly why, but somehow I didn’t believe my recovery was due to qi. Probably in my subconscious, I was suspicious that others could have manipulated me like a fool. So I went home, knowing I had been cured, but nonetheless a doubter.”



Yu Tian Ming

Yu recounts how he gradually changed his mind:

When people found out that I had been in the Center, they asked me to teach them Zhineng Qigong. Well, it was no big deal for me to teach them in the park. One day someone asked me to emit qi to him in order to facilitate his healing, and when I did, he claimed that he was cured. I dismissed it as a student being polite. However, as I performed more qi healings, people kept telling me the same thing.

Without trying, I became a well-known healer in my area. Then one day a relative came to me requesting that I perform a healing on him. But I refused,

because I am not a doctor and I didn't want to bear any responsibility if he died. 'But the doctors have already sentenced me to death! Please help me,' he pleaded, with his family at his side.

I finally agreed to try, but told his family not to blame me if he died, adding, 'I am treating a dead horse as if it were alive.' After a week of qi treatment, the patient became more spirited and could sleep well. However, when he later reacted to qi by developing a high fever and having frequent bowel movements, I became worried. Immediately, I sent him to the Center, where he recovered a month later.

After this event, I was totally convinced of the existence of qi and its power, and I have been an ardent supporter of Lao-shi ever since.

The Method

The practice of qigong in China is perhaps 5,000 years old. Traditionally, it has been used to cultivate health, spiritual growth and longevity, somewhat like yoga. There are no references in the classical medical texts to curing disease with qigong.

Until the 1980's, the practice of qigong was a closely guarded secret within certain families and religious institutions, all of which had their own style or form. Dr. Pang Ming, a qigong grandmaster and physician trained in both Western and Chinese medicine, pioneered the use of qigong for healing and gradually synthesized Zhineng Qigong from his knowledge of various forms and medical principles.



Dr. Pang Ming

According to students, Zhineng Qigong is best suited for healing. Zhou Fu-Chin, a woman of 58, notes: "I had tried other types of qigong before and they didn't work for me." At the Center she cured herself of heart palpitation, severe headaches, an ovarian tumor and a tendency to faint while walking.

Zhang Chang-Rong, M.D., a woman of 64, comments: "I learned many types of qigong. I decided to give up all other forms of exercise, however, to practice Zhineng Qigong exclusively."

Dr. Zhang was chief internist at a major hospital before she retired due to coronary disease, chronic bronchitis and rheumatoid arthritis. "Since I worked in a hospital, I had free access to all the drugs I needed," she says. After her retirement, she practiced Zhineng Qigong with a local group. "Eventually all my illnesses left me, and I didn't need to take medication anymore. I became so energetic that I wanted to go back to work."

Of what, exactly, does Zhineng Qigong consist? The most basic form involves standing with feet together and moving one's arms through a series of slow, gentle movements. From a biomechanical viewpoint, the muscles of the neck and shoulders are gradually warmed up and loosened, as well as those of the lower back, two areas where tension accumulates in most people. There is also a mental component. At the beginning of the form, students are told to imagine

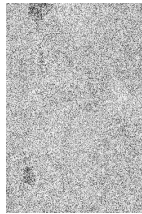
themselves merging into each of the four directions, and throughout the various movements one visualizes either “the blue sky” or “deep inside” one’s body.

Though it is not possible to analyze Zhineng Qigong in Western terms (of cause and effect), one can distinguish some salient characteristics:

- the basic form takes only a few hours to learn—as opposed to years for certain other types of qigong
- even small portions of the routine may be effective in promoting health
- there is no religion involved
- the movements are circular and evenly balanced between opening and closing

Zhineng Qigong also encompasses certain stand-alone exercises that can be practiced anytime, anywhere. To get a flavor of the form, two exercises are described below:

Wall Squatting



Stand with feet together about a foot away from a smooth wall. Relax your shoulders and let your arms dangle. Slowly bend your knees, keeping your heels on the ground and looking straight ahead. Slowly drop down as far as you can. Try to curl your back one vertebra at a time. (If you get your wrists below your knees you’re doing great!) Smoothly reverse and come back up. Repeat up to 100 times.

La Chi



Imagine you are holding a weightless grapefruit, with your fingers and palms almost touching. Close your eyes and slowly pull your hands apart, as if you were pulling apart a soap bubble. When your hands are shoulder-width apart, reverse the process, bringing your hands together as if against the resistance of the air, until your palms and fingers almost touch.

During the opening movement, visualize a fleecy cloud unraveling wisp by wisp into a blue sky. During the closing movement, picture the blue sky within yourself. This visualization can also be used for the two phases of the wall squat as well.

Liu Xing-Ceng, a young man of 21, was deaf. His case history does not specify the type of deafness, but presumably it was sensorineural. He tried many treatments, including electrically charged acupuncture needles inserted in the ears. One day his high school teacher taught him La Chi, and Liu practiced it as much as four hours a day. After fourteen days he felt pain in his ears, but he nevertheless persevered. Several weeks later his hearing improved significantly.

Liu’s story illustrates the power of a single qigong exercise. There is a curious twist to his story, however. Liu’s classmates made fun of his La Chi practice, and he quit. Subsequently, his hearing deteriorated again. A year later, Liu’s parents sent him to the Center, where he completely recovered his hearing.

Another student, Jing Shan, introduced in *An Open Mind*, practiced wall squatting with his son for many hours at a time. His son's record for consecutive wall squats was 700. Jing himself did 1,200. They both experienced dramatic improvements in health within 24 days.

On a personal note, I have tried Wall Squatting and La Chi myself. To do the Wall Squat, I sometimes "cheat" by standing on a slight forward incline. Also, I use an imaginary wall, so that I can extend my arms in front of me. Despite these deviations from pure form, I have felt a tingling warmth travel up my spine at times. My chronic lumbar pain is somewhat better, although it is difficult to quantify, or to say how much is due to the Wall Squatting. The bottom line, however, is that I continue to practice Wall Squatting every day; somehow my body wants it, regardless of how tired or lazy I may feel. My personal record for wall squats is five in a row.

The experience of La Chi is more subtle and difficult to describe. It seems conducive to a state of relaxed awareness. It is particularly useful for sitting through long meetings and lectures.

Determination

A man who does 1,200 wall squats in a row to cure himself is not your average patient, even by Chinese standards. Throughout the case histories, the determination and self-discipline of these patients is apparent.

Ren Jing Xiang, a man of 42, suffered from heart problems for four years. He was scheduled for open heart surgery in 1993, but the surgeon advised him to wait until his heart failed completely. He came to the Center on the off-chance that it might help. "One night as I was practicing holding my hands up," he relates, "I told myself that to heal my illness I must have determination." He felt some heart palpitations, but continued to keep his hands up. "After some time, I felt my heartbeat quiet down. Worried at first, I told myself that I would rather die than put my hands down. As time went on, I felt changes in my heart as its beats and sounds returned to normal. When the cock crowed the next morning, I sensed my heart had completely recovered." Eight and a half hours had passed.



Ren Jing Xiang

An EKG test confirmed Ren's intuition: his heart had returned to normal, and it was still normal as of 1995.



Such triumphs of will are not limited to men. Yu Xun-Lan, a woman of 63, had high blood pressure, coronary disease, gallstones, kidney problems, and rheumatoid arthritis. "Other than my lungs, all my body functions were bad," she says. "Every specialist in the hospital knew me by name, as I regularly took turns seeing them. After being in and out of the hospital for about ten years, I suddenly developed blockages in the blood vessels of my brain, which caused half of my body to become paralyzed. This was the last straw in my already hopeless situation, and doctors predicted that I would soon become totally paralyzed."

Yu began to practice Zhi-neng Qigong with a park group in her own town. "I needed to do the movements near a tree, so that I could hold onto it if I fell. With the tree as my companion, I

battled my pain in sweat and tears. Each time I squatted down the pain was excruciating. Yet after each struggle I felt better and proud of myself. Finally I was doing something to fight back at my diseases, and I felt satisfaction in being able to throw some punches head on—pain against pain.”

After twenty days she discontinued her medications and was able to walk around slowly. In three months she was practically normal. “Now after ten years of daily practice,” she observes, “I am better physically and mentally than many people my junior.”

It is well known in Western medicine, of course, that a patient’s determination and motivation play a key role in his or her prognosis. It would be easy to conclude that the students at the Center are “survivors,” statistical anomalies, and their recoveries can be explained largely on the basis of this factor alone. This reasoning has two flaws, however. First, most of the students had extensive treatment with Western medicine, acupuncture, and/or herbal medicine before arriving at the Center. Why didn’t their knack for survival make their prior treatment successful? Second, not all the students arrive with plenty of determination. Ma Chiao, a woman of 42 with breast cancer metastasized to the bones, narrates:

I expected it [the Center] to be similar to a regular hospital, with the Zhineng Qigong masters taking care of me while I spent most of my time in bed. However, I was somewhat disappointed to find that the prescription for my illness was hard work.[...]

My hope dimmed when I found I wasn’t improving that much compared with my classmates. I began to question why I should work myself to exhaustion every day instead of resting comfortably at home. So after staying at the Center for one month, I went home.

For the first few days at home, I was glad that I was getting plenty of rest. However, I soon realized getting out of bed was becoming more and more difficult as my illness progressed. In the Center, I was able to put in eight hours of Zhineng Qigong fighting my disease; at home, I could hardly go down the stairs without feeling fatigued.



Ma Chiao

Realizing that I was only vegetating to death at home, I returned to the Center with a new appreciation of its value. Where before I had acted as an unwilling participant, now I became an active member of the group. I worked diligently every day, helping my classmates whenever possible.[...] With a changed attitude, I began to notice the symptoms of my cancer disappearing.

Ma’s determination, then, developed in response to something she experienced at the Center.

Community

As the preceding example illustrates, a sense of community helps promote the healing process. Although results can be obtained by practicing Zhineng Qigong by oneself, the effect is amplified when a group of like-minded individuals join together.

The story of Zhou Shu-Zhi, a man of 34 who suffered from a mental breakdown due to job stress, illustrates. He practiced Zhineng Qigong at home for two months with a local teacher, but could not concentrate. His mental problems did not improve. His teacher suggested that he try practicing with a group. “With the collective qi effect of all the participants,” she told him, “you concentrate more easily.” Sure enough, after he joined a group he slowly improved.

A community also nourishes the heart. Many students speak of “feeling at home” at the Center. Li Chong-Cheng, a man of 50 with liver cancer metastasized to the lungs, recalls:

I remember vividly the moment I stepped out of the railway station and saw many teachers standing in line to welcome me. People were coming from all parts of the country, some in wheelchairs, some walking on crutches, some like myself being helped by family members.

Once we were on the bus, our teacher said: ‘Welcome, students, you must be tired after such a long journey. With all our hearts, we welcome you to the Zhineng Qigong Center. From now on, you are Lao-shi’s guests, and the Center is your home. Welcome home!’

Our teacher said this with such sincerity that many of us were moved to tears. With such a warm reception, my body began to heal from the very beginning.

From a Western standpoint, it may be tempting to attribute much of the Center’s success to the effect of community. The problem with this hypothesis is that, like the “survivor hypothesis”, it rests on a faulty assumption: that community can be produced at will, like whipping up a batch of jello. On the contrary, community only develops when individuals are inspired by a common purpose.

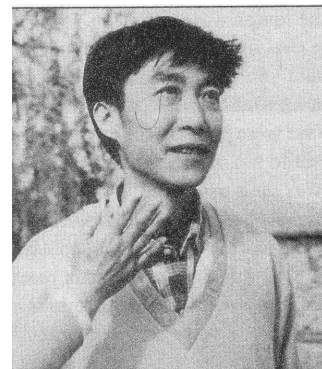
Faith

What role does faith actually play in the Center’s success? The story of Lu Pei-De, 52, a newspaper reporter who had lung cancer, is instructive:

I used to be very active in encouraging people with cancer to undergo surgery and chemotherapy promptly. In fact, I was elected secretary of the Cancer Society of Shanghai.[...]

When two cancerous lumps reappeared on my neck two years later [after his right lung was removed], doctors were unable to help me. They told me I was too weak to undergo another surgery and put me on chemotherapy for a few months. When chemotherapy didn’t help, I was on my own. I had reached a dead end, and I was ready for anything.

It so happened that at this time Lao-shi was giving a lecture in Shanghai, and I was given a ticket to see him. Even though I felt very weak, I managed, with the help of a taxi, to get to the lecture. Just from listening to Lao-shi’s talk, my energy level



Lu Pei-De

increased enough for me to go home on a crowded bus. When I got home I began to eat as though I had been hungry for a long time. [...]

With new hope, my wife and I arrived at the Center in November, 1994. When I told my teacher why I had come to the Center, she asked me to show her the lumps on my neck. 'This is a minor problem,' she said, delivering qi to my neck. 'Touch them to see if they have disappeared.'

Unbelievably, my lumps were gone!

Andrew Weil, international expert on alternative medicine, makes a distinction between "superficial belief" and "belief that counts". "If I believe a shaman has power over me because I have an intellectual interest in shamanism," he observes, "that is not the same as believing it because I have seen him produce unexplainable effects and feel physical fear in his presence."⁴ Lu Pei De's cure, then, can perhaps be explained in this way: he had only intellectual belief in his cancer doctors, but felt a visceral belief in Lao-shi. But this line of reasoning still begs the question: why did Lao-shi evoke real belief? What is the source of his power?

Lao-shi

Lao-shi means "teacher"; it is the title given to Pang Ming, M.D., the originator of Zhineng Qigong and the founder and director of the Zhineng Qigong Center.

Dr. Pang is a man of unquestionable integrity and sincerity. Though the Center runs as an independent, self-sufficient organization with no government, foundation or industry funding, the tuition for a 24-day treatment program is only one hundred yuan (about twelve dollars). No money is spent on advertising; the Center relies exclusively on word-of-mouth.

Though many students credit Dr. Pang for their healing, he disavows any special power. "I have only a certain amount of qi, and so do you," he tells students at a welcoming ceremony. "If it were my qi alone that could heal, I would be drawn dry. It is the qi that has been gathered here by all of us that heals."

Dr. Pang undoubtedly possesses some charisma, as evidenced by the number of people who benefit simply from hearing him speak. After a lecture he asks for people to stand if they have tumors that have softened or shrunk in the course of the evening. There are always some. Is this charisma innate, or did he develop it through the practice of qigong?

All the teachers at the Center participate in "emitting qi" to make tumors shrink or disappear. On a videotape, I watched teachers emit qi to a cancer patient. A TV monitor imaged the patient's tumor. As the teachers concentrated, the tumor slowly decreased in size, until after a few minutes it disappeared.

Do such phenomena represent true healing or a temporary remission? One does not know for certain, but the mere fact of a tumor disappearing without surgery or drugs is cause enough for wonder.

⁴ Andrew Weil, *Health and Healing*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1995), p. 253

Attitude

Andrew Weil writes: “Whatever initiates it and however it works, a dramatic change in consciousness can affect the course of an illness for the better, even a very serious illness like Hodgkin’s disease.”⁵ He cites the example of a twenty-six-year-old white female, S.R., suffering from Hodgkin’s disease. Under medical supervision she took an LSD trip, during which she had the sudden and overwhelming realization that it is her choice to live or die. In the ensuing weeks, she made a number of major changes in her life. She left her husband, changed her field of study, took Gestalt psychology training, and learned meditation. Over time, she became a healthy, vibrant woman; even her hair, which had been straight and black before falling out during chemotherapy, grew back curly and red.

Such a change in attitude is seen in many of the case histories at the Center. In the story of Ma Chiao (*Determination*), for example, a new attitude was instrumental in her recovery. Like the woman cited by Weil, Ma Chiao’s change in attitude was essentially an empowerment of herself—“I understood that recovery has a lot to do with willingness to help oneself and others.”

Is a change in attitude a precondition for healing, or a sign of healing? Perhaps both. In any case, the Zhineng Center seems to inspire such changes with remarkable consistency.

Visualization



Meng Zhao-Chui, a man of 71, was dying of lymphatic cancer. Teachers from the Center came to visit him in the hospital. “When they found out I couldn’t move much,” he relates, “they told me to practice Zhineng Qigong by using just my fingers, and to imagine myself opening to the universe and gathering qi into my body.” Although doctors predicted he had only three months to live, against all odds Meng survived. During the next two years his cancer returned and left three times. At the time of the interview he was cancer free for a year and in good health.

Visualization, then, would seem to be a mental extension of the physical practice of Zhineng Qigong. When an individual is too weak to move, visualization may still be practiced to good effect.

The image of opening oneself to the universe and gathering qi into oneself is analogous to the physical movements, which involve slowly opening the arms and then bringing them together, with variations. So visualization echoes and reinforces the physical practice of qigong.

Students are told to visualize the blue sky during qigong practice. Luke Chan, the first certified teacher of Zhineng Qigong in America, writes: “Think blue sky when you are doing the opening movements, and the inside of your body when you are doing the closing movements.” What is the significance of this image?

The blue sky conveys a particular feeling—serenity, expansion, lightness—which corresponds to opening oneself to the universe.

⁵ Andrew Weil, *op. cit.*, p. 241

It is instructive to compare the use of visualization in Zhineng Qigong with its application in Western psychotherapy. Gilda Radner, best known to the American public for her comic impersonations on “Saturday Night Live”, describes her experiences with visualization in the best selling book, *It’s Always Something*. After being diagnosed with cancer, Radner had a hysterectomy and chemotherapy, then went to a therapist specializing in relaxation and visualization techniques. He instructed her to “visualize the cancer cells and see them as evil and visualize them being removed from your body.”

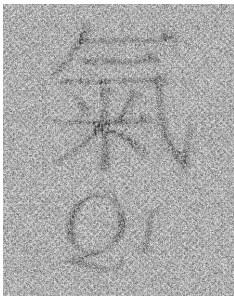
In Zhineng Qigong, however, students are warned specifically **not** to focus on their illness. Why? Though no reason is given, a possible reason is that, by focusing on something negative, one undermines the healing process. In other words, one cannot fight the darkness; one can only open oneself to the light.

Gilda Radner’s story ends tragically. She got another tumor and began a new round of chemotherapy. Throughout this treatment she remained hopeful of recovery. Several months later she died.

The Mysterious Nature of Qi

Throughout the discussion so far, each component of the healing process has turned out to be related to some other component, or to the process as a whole. Is there a core factor that ties all the pieces together?

The concept of “qi” is foreign to Western culture, at least in scientific circles. To translate this word adequately one would have to return to the ancient Greek word, “pneuma,” meaning “wind,” “breath,” “spirit.” Pneuma has long been considered the exclusive property of religion⁶, however, and not a subject for scientific inquiry or practical medicine⁷. The Chinese have never been constrained by this distinction.



The concept of qi in China dates back 5,000 years. Its ideogram depicts steam rising from a pot of freshly cooked rice. This image expresses the idea that qi arises from nourishment, is in fact the essence of food, yet has no substance.

There are many types of qi in Chinese medical philosophy, though all are variations on a theme. Even money is a form of qi. Qi cannot be created; one form of qi flows in exchange for another of equal value. The type of qi gathered through the practice of Zhineng Qigong, according to Dr. Pang, is “integral qi”, which he calls the most fundamental qi, the stuff of which the universe is made. The most appropriate word to translate “integral qi” would be the ancient Greek term, “logos,” as used by John in the famous passage: “In the beginning was the logos[...]from which all things were conceived.” This qi, then, is the precursor of all qi, the stem cell qi.

⁶ “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” (John iii. 8)

⁷ The only Western science to take the concept of pneuma seriously is homeopathy. In the writings of J.T. Kent, MD, for example, it is called “simple substance”. See *Lectures on Homeopathic Philosophy*, (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1979)

The students of the Center are not so metaphysically inclined, of course. Jing Shan (*An Open Mind*) relates: “In a hospital, I can see the fluids and I can smell the sanitary agents and different types of drugs. [...] I couldn’t see, smell, or hear qi. It was unreal to me at the time.”

Why would people believe in the concept of qi when they can’t see, touch or smell it? Sun Gui-On, a woman of 44 with a uterine tumor, recalls: “When I arrived at the Center, I had a strange feeling that I’d been here before. My whole body seemed immersed in a great energy field, and I felt an instant release. After two months of practice, my tumor was gone, as confirmed by ultrasound examinations. My heart rate and blood pressure also returned to normal.”

Many students feel nothing, however, though their symptoms go away. Luke Chan writes: “When I interviewed students whose cancers had been dissolved by qi emitted through their bodies, they told me that they hadn’t felt any special sensation of qi when being treated.”

Professor Meng Zhao-Chui, mentioned in *Visualization*, heads a small research department at the Center. He has designed experiments that investigate the effect of qi on electric phenomena. In one experiment, dead batteries were recharged by an individual emitting qi to them.

Li Ru-Chai, 62, a teacher at the Center and former student, likes to demonstrate the power of qi by restoring a cracked egg to its original wholeness before an audience of students.

In Western scientific terms, qi could denote some type of bioelectromagnetic field that influences the activity of living cells. A strong field promotes health and longevity, while a weakened field leads to disease and death.

To strengthen the qi field in oneself is an art that must be practiced. Some students get the knack of it more easily than others. Simplicity and humility are a great advantage. Liu Zheng-Chong, a 68 year old woman from the plains of Inner Mongolia with an ovarian tumor, observes:

I didn’t comprehend the qi theory. I had nothing to lose, why should I question this or that? I am only a simple old woman, and I just follow what the teachers tell me. After two months practice, the doctors put me in some kind of machine and told me that my disease had vanished. Now I am as free and happy as the eagles over the grassland.



Liu Zheng Chong and granddaughter

Conclusion

“Gong” is the principle that accomplishments are the result of daily effort. We have seen that the success of the Zhineng Qigong Center in healing people is a function of the unique nature of qi and its daily cultivation through physical and mental practices.

Seven factors have been identified as important or essential to healing:

- 1) an open mind
- 2) determination and dedication
- 3) a community of people helping each other and themselves
- 4) willingness to believe in one’s own experience
- 5) a qualified teacher
- 6) desire to live
- 7) proper visualization

The above list is not exhaustive; there are doubtless other factors we have not identified. The essential lesson, however, is that each factor depends on and supports the others, so a positive cycle of life-enhancing influences arises. The path of healing is circular, and it must be circumambulated repeatedly until a critical threshold is reached.

Faith healing does not explain the Center’s results, since the students do not rely solely on “supplication to a divine being” but take an active role in their own recovery. Faith healing is actually a rare phenomenon, moreover, and has never yielded the kind of statistically impressive results seen at the Center.

Is Zhineng Qigong a new form of medicine? This question is tricky, because it assumes that qigong *is* a form of medicine. Medicine treats disease symptoms, while Zhineng Qigong, on the other hand, is a path of life enhancement. When an individual chooses this path, the body’s innate ability to heal itself is stimulated, and disease symptoms disappear.

Can Zhineng Qigong work in the West? Luke Chan gives workshops around the U.S. and publishes a quarterly newsletter. In a recent newsletter, he tells the story of a young woman, Deborah, who took up qigong for her health. When results were not forthcoming, she became discouraged and quit. When she met her husband, Stuart, however, he encouraged her to resume qigong and accompanied her in her practice. Over time her condition improved dramatically.

But there are few individuals in the West at this point who will exchange drugs and surgery for Qigong. Such a choice requires too much faith in an unproven therapy, which incidentally requires far too much effort, time and self-discipline for our liking. Of course there are other routes to healing, but surely they too require more than just a financial commitment. In the end one must find a path to which one can give oneself, heart and soul.