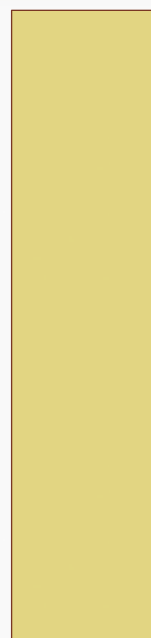




QIGONG FOR MENOPAUSAL SYMPTOMS

A CASE FOR IMPLEMENTING QIGONG
IN A HEALTHCARE SETTING



INTRODUCTION

Menopause is a normal stage of aging for women between 45-55 years of age (Office on Women's Health, 2019). Physical changes can happen as the body adapts to a difference in levels of hormones (Office on Women's Health, 2019). This occurs in three stages called peri-menopause, menopause and post menopause where many experience unpleasant symptoms (Office on Women's Health, 2019). More than 85% of women will experience an array of these problematic symptoms throughout the stages of menopause (Johnson et al., 2019).



Common Symptoms:

- Hot flashes
- Sleep disturbances
- Night sweats
- Psychological changes
- Poor digestion
- Vaginal changes

(Shannon, 2005)

Common Treatments:

- Birth Control
- Hormone Replacement
- SSRI
- Prasterone
- OTC products
- Other prescription meds.

(Office on Women's Health, 2019)

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Though there are many different pharmacological treatments available for women at different stages of menopause, many are concerned with long-term use and side-effects (Johnson et al., 2019).



For example, hormone therapy is the most commonly used treatment for symptoms, but with the high health risks associated with the treatment, many women are unable or choose not to use it (Johnson et al., 2019). As symptoms can last up to 15 years, many women seek alternative treatments outside of biomedicine (Johnson et al., 2019).

Approximately 51% of women already seek out complimentary and alternative medicine (CAM) modalities and 60% of those find them effective, but consider their options confusing (Johnson et al., 2019). Physicians need to talk to women about the possible addition of complimentary options for their symptoms, either in coordination with other treatments or as alternatives.

This kind of integrated approach could ensure effective treatments with reduce risk of adverse effects (Johnson et al., 2019).

Although research does not yet provide evidence as to which specific CAM modality helps most with a specific menopausal symptom, most produce few side effects for a wide variety of symptoms when administered by an experienced CAM professional (Johnson et al., 2019)

PROPOSED SOLUTION



Acupuncture

A technique of insertion and manipulation of fine needles in specific points on the body to achieve therapeutic purposes (Chon et al., 2013).

Acupuncture is based on the idea that all living things have an internal energy that sustains them called “Qi” or life force (Chon et al., 2013). Balancing Qi is vital to achieving optimal health and to prevent disease and illness (Chon et al., 2013). Acupuncture can help manage disease symptoms by reintroducing a balanced flow of Qi (Chon et al., 2013).



Avis et al (2017) reported that in 209 perimenopausal and postmenopausal women, approximately half experienced a relief in symptoms after 20 acupuncture treatments over 8 weeks.

However, 41% reported essentially no benefit from the acupuncture treatments and this lead to further investigating predicted responses (Avis et al., 2017). They found that the only clear possible predictor of low clinical response to acupuncture was in women with a diagnosed kidney yin deficiency or unbalanced Qi (Avis et al., 2017; Li, 2017).

Life processes of the human body depend on kidney Qi balance to fully function (Li, 2017). Qigong is a major Chinese medical therapy used to strengthen Qi and balance kidney energy deficiencies or Kidney Qi (Li, 2017).





Qigong

A practice of Traditional Chinese Medicine which uses specific postures, proper breathing and mental reframing to integrate and cleanse the body (Traditional Chinese Medicine, n.d.)

Qi refers to a life force energy circulating within and throughout the body; breath, vital essence, or energy (Chen, 2015; McCaffrey & Fowler, 2003). Gong refers to consistent practices; daily effort, self-discipline, or mastery (Chen, 2015; McCaffrey & Fowler, 2003). Qigong can take on several forms, but regardless of the form, it relies on breath work and the flow of Qi using gentle exercise for the breath, mind, and the voice (Chen, 2015; McCaffrey & Fowler, 2003).

With elements of Taoist and Buddhist philosophies, one must live within law of balance and harmony, within the rhythms of nature (McCaffrey & Fowler, 2003).

There are 12 meridians or major energy channels, used by both acupuncture and qigong, that move energy or Qi throughout the body like an electrical current through wire (McCaffrey & Fowler, 2003).



Flow of qi (McCaffrey & Fowler, 2003).

Not only does Qigong increase the Qi needed to more effectively utilize acupuncture, the practice itself uses exercises formulated to treat each woman individual according to her symptoms (Shannon, 2005). Qigong can regulate, harmonize and balance the body more safely and gradually than other medical therapies (Shannon, 2005). This is done by emitting Qi into the body and releasing stale or unwanted energy all via Qigong practice (Shannon, 2005).

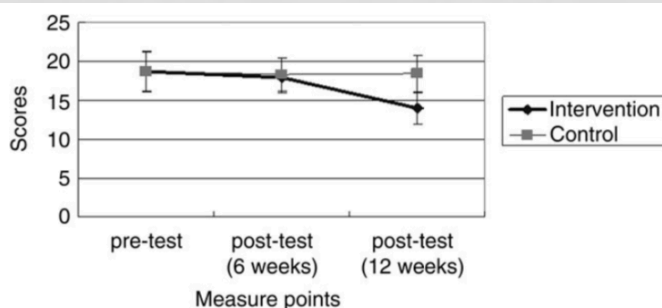
EVIDENCE FOR QIGONG

Chen (2015), presented a literature review of ways in which practicing Qigong was beneficial to a woman's health through the life cycle. This including menopausal-related symptoms as well as other physical and psychological illness, many of which can also present during menopause (Chen, 2015). Of the 48 reviewed works, all support positive findings for forms of Qigong and woman's health (Chen, 2015). More research is encouraged regarding Qigong for menopause since the outcomes suggests promising signs (Chen, 2015). Sample sizes were small, most involved quantitative studies and little has been conducted specifically on menopause(Chen, 2015). Also, much of the research has been done on Tai Chi and Baduanjin, which are categories of Qigong, but not on Qigong as a whole (Chen, 2015).

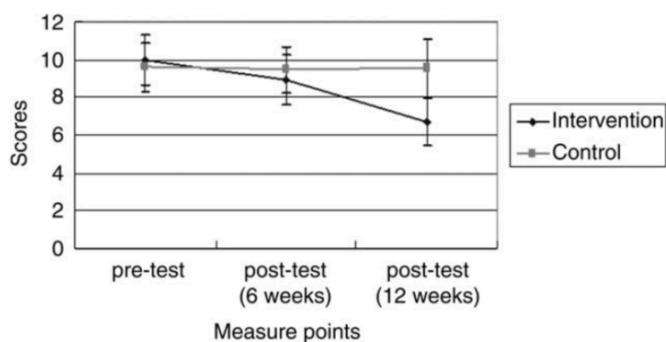
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Yeh and Chang (2012), examined the effects of Qigong on climacteric symptoms and sleep quality in perimenopausal women. The intervention group practice Qigong for 30 minutes-per-day for 12 weeks while the control group did not (Yeh & Chang, 2012). Those in the intervention group showed significant improvements compared to the control group (Yeh & Chang, 2012).

Climacteric symptoms



Sleep Quality



OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Safety

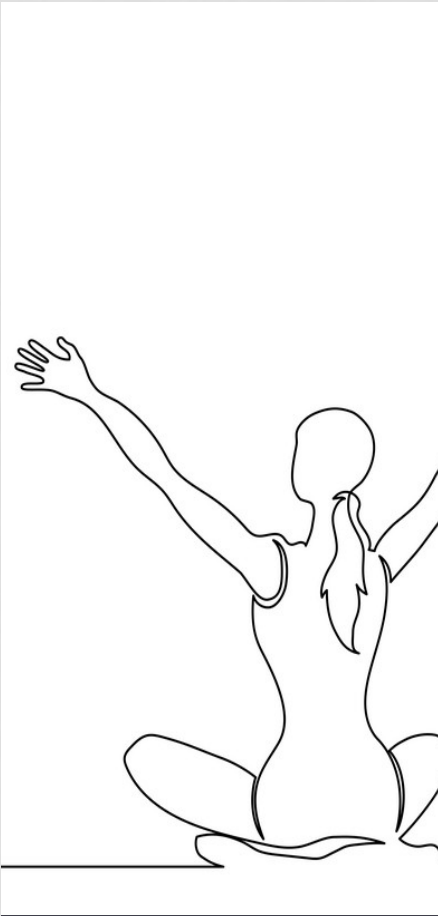
In systemic review, Guo et al (2018) suggests that the rise in popularity of Qigong is due in part to it's safety when conducted by an experienced professional. It is not without risk, however. Some physical and psychological adverse events can occur, but evidence has not been clearly established (Guo et al., 2018). Practitioners simply need to follow standardized procedures of the practice and fully understand the potential adverse events that can be associated with Qigong (Guo et al., 2018). This is the same as in any practitioner in healthcare needs the credentials and experience to provide safe and effective services.

Cost

Several cost analysis and comparisons regarding other diagnoses reveal that Qigong is a cost effective complementary modality for women's health (Chen, 2015). Using Qigong can not only offer more treatment opportunities for common symptoms of menopause, but also help eliminate health disparities and maintain health equity through easier accessibility for the socio-economic disadvantaged and under-served groups (Chen, 2015).



CONCLUSION



Qigong can help improve physiological fitness, longevity and inner-peace (Chen, 2015).

It is a practice that can help women maintain a healthy lifestyle throughout the years through flexibility, aerobic and weight bearing exercises (Shannon, 2005). In addition, regular practice strengthens and regulates the internal organs, the nervous system and immune system, relieves pain, regulates hormones, relieves stress and releases deep-seated emotions (Shannon, 2005).

Qigong is designed to improve the balance and flow of energy throughout the meridians, and to increase the overall quantity and volume of Qi. (McCaffrey & Fowler, 2003). Thus Qigong has the potential to not only be beneficial on it's own, but to also increase outcomes in acupuncture treatments. A Qigong program is easy to establish and a cost effective, safe program to compliment other treatments in healthcare settings when attempting to help women who suffer from menopausal symptoms.

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