

## Qi-Cultivation and Dao

### Integrating Theory with Experience: Medical Qigong for Healing and Health Care

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#### Abstract

Medical Qigong functions to activate, cultivate, balance, harmonize, transform and manage the qi/energy-information for self-healing, self-care and for healing others. A form of qi-energy can be manipulated for facilitating the internal and external communications at energetic, emotional, mental and spiritual levels.

#### Brief Introduction

According to teaching of Taoist Masters Zhongli Quan and Lü Dongbin, the best medicine can be produced by internal Qi cultivation, with greater balance and harmony of the internal organs<sup>1</sup>. Zhongli Quan and Lü Dongbin designed "**Baduanjin**," one of the most common forms of medical qigong, translated as *Eight Pieces of Brocade, or Eight Silken Movements* for improving general health and the quality of people's life<sup>2</sup>. Medical qigong can be traced back to ancient times in China. Qigong has also been known as "**Dao Yin**<sup>3 4</sup>," which means "guiding and directing the Qi flow" by means of specific movements and breathing.

It was during the Jin dynasty (A.D. 265-420), and the Northern and Southern dynasties (A.D. 420-589), that Qigong developed as a way of self-healing and self-care and as a method for treating disease through the emission of Qi by doctors<sup>5</sup>. During the Jin dynasty, Zhang Zhan listed in his work *Nurturing Life Essentials Summary* (Yao Ji) ten essential practices, of which thrift of mentality, cultivating Qi, and Daoyin were all related to Medical Qigong<sup>5</sup>. During the Northern and Southern dynasties, many ancient Medical Qigong methods and theories were recorded in Tao Hongjing's book, *Nurturing Life and Improving*

*Longevity* (Yang Sheng Yan Ming Lu)<sup>5</sup>. In the History of the Jin Dynasty (Jin Shu), there is a record of doctor Xing Ling who was known for projecting his Qi to cure a patient who had suffered more than ten years from flaccidity arthralgia syndrome (arthralgia syndrome is mainly characterized by aching pain, swelling in tendons, bones, muscles and joints, and incapability of flexing and extending).<sup>6</sup> As a result of his success, many more people became interested in external medical Qigong<sup>5</sup>. A medical qigong therapist can project his/her qi to heal another person. The emitted qi has information that can communicate with the Qi condition of the patient for activating the healing process<sup>7</sup>. At the present time in China there are many medical qigong clinics, and in some hospitals medical qigong is integrated with traditional Chinese medicine and conventional Western medicine. Recently a few medical qigong hospitals and schools have been established in China such as Hebei Medical Qigong School and Hospital<sup>8</sup>, Hebei, China.

Currently, in China, four styles of qigong--*Eight Pieces of Brocade, Frolics of Five Animals, Tendon Strengthening Exercise, and Six Healing Sounds*--have come to be considered the official qigong<sup>9</sup> (since 2003) for promoting people's health and well-being by the Chinese Health Qigong Association<sup>10</sup>. These styles of qigong are excellent choices, but they have been taught only as movement and breathing exercises, but the authentic qi based training is lost, which is the essence and substance of medical qigong.

### **Authentic Qi Activation**

Experiencing the qi in qigong practice is the result or product of the Yin and Yang communications and interactions. This qi, the new and fresh vital energy, not only can be produced from the hands, but also can be produced between both kidneys as well as different Yin/Yang partnerships in the body. This fresh vital-energy-based practice is the unique character of medical qigong. The key feature of medical qigong practice is the fresh and vital energy--authentic qi activation. How do practitioners accomplish authentic qi activation? Two

thousand five hundred years ago Laozi stated that: “*Dao gives birth to One; One gives birth to Two; Two gives birth to Three; and three gives birth to all things.*” (*Dao De Jing Chapter 42*)<sup>11 12</sup>. The new birth of the three was emphasized as the source of all things. From internal observation and experiential understanding, practitioners of medical qigong realize that the Qi specifically means the new birth number **three**-the fresh Vital Energy **VE3**, which is generated from the Yin and Yang interactions. The **VE3** is the key for developing the entire internal energy pathway network or the qi matrix and for internal and external communications. This fresh vital energy (VE3) is the product of Yin and Yang interactions--**Authentic Qi**. The authentic qi activation requires the following three conditions: 1) relax the mind and the body; 2) recall the mind back inward and adjust the mind into the state of *Xuan*; and 3) guide the yin and the yang to interact with each other appropriately.

### **Relaxation**

A relaxed state is the precondition for achieving desirable results and making good progress in Qigong practice. Usually, people use too much energy and attention to focus, many times over what is necessary. Excess concentration creates pressure, stress, and blockages in the body. But an unfocused mind or scattered mind leads to loss of energy and causes tiredness and exhaustion. A relaxed state means a physical condition where internal energy flows freely, without any tension, stiffness, and limpness, but with a sense of flexibility, springiness and aliveness. During Qigong practice, it is important to be aware of any tension, stiffness, and limpness and to get rid of them in order to achieve a harmonized and relaxed state of mind and body.

### **A Stable *Xuan* State of Mind**

Meditation is an important practice in Qigong training because it is a necessary process for training the mind to direct and regulate the energy flow in the body. Once the energy is activated it must be coordinated with the activities of the mind, so that mind and body can benefit from the synchronization and mutual

influence. The mind, when trained by meditation, is able to perceive the subtle levels at which the Qi functions, both at the level of the mind and at the level of the body.

In the first chapter of Dao De Jing, Laozi said: "The "Way" (Dao or Tao) can be taught, but here the way I speak of is different from the ordinary way; a name can be given, but I don't want to give it an ordinary name. "Wu"--the state of emptiness (zero) is the beginning of everything. "You"--the state of appearance of initial intelligence and thoughts (one) is the origin of the manifestation of things and events. The stable state of Wu is required for observing and revealing the secret of creation and new developments; the stable state of You is required for observing and recognizing the false and the true. Both states, Wu and You, are called by different names but they both issue from the same source called "Xuan"--the state of the golden secret of all life. The stable state of Xuan (between zero and one) is the gate of internal cultivation and realization, as well as external recognition and understanding of the creation and development of everything<sup>11</sup>."

Laozi found that the state of mind between the Wu, emptiness, and the You, appearance, of the initial thought, a state which he called "Xuan," is the entry into the golden secret of all life. This *xuan* state of mind allows the intellectual mind to integrate with the intuitive mind and the dream system in order to work on internal cultivation and development as well as to experience and exercise internal local communications and non-local communications<sup>11</sup>. Thus, the Way Laozi taught in his Dao De Jing is the Way of *Xuan* (*Xuan Dao*-NOT ordinary Dao), and the studies of the Way of Laozi can be viewed as "*Xuan Xue*" (in Chinese history from 240-589 C.E., viewed as mythology)<sup>13</sup>. For successful Medical Qigong training, the master key for activating, cultivating and managing the authentic Qi, vital energy VE3, is to develop a stable *xuan* state of mind.

### **Appropriate Interactions of Yin and Yang**

In the view of ancient Daoists, everything, every phenomenon in nature, has two poles--Yin and Yang. According to the ancient classic, Yijing-the *Book of Changes*, "one Yin plus one Yang, is the Dao." This statement refers to the Dao that first

determines itself as Unity (or the One), and then gives birth to the opposites, interdependent, simultaneous, and complementary two aspects, Yin and Yang. There are so many levels or layers of Yin and Yang in nature and in the universe. Examples of such opposites/interdependencies include the protons and electrons of atoms, the hydrogen and the oxygen of water, the water and the fire, the lake and the mountain, the sun and the moon, the east and the west, the day and the night, the heaven and the earth, the male and female of human beings, the left hand and the right hand, the left eye and the right eye, the hands and the feet, the sympathetic nervous system and the parasympathetic nervous system, the left kidney and the right kidney, the kidneys and the heart in the physical body, etc. In addition, interactions between Yin and Yang give birth to the authentic Qi, the number 3, Vital Energy-VE3. For example, if a medical qigong practitioner brings his or her hands in front of the chest with palms facing each other, relaxes the neck, shoulders and elbows, uses a soft focus/relaxed mind to pay attention to the right hand and the left hand, slightly waves the hands, and lets the right hand and the left hand interact with each other, the practitioner will become aware of energetic sensation on the palms and between the hands; he or she may feel sensations like magnetic feelings or rubber bands between the hands, or warmth of the palms, heaviness of the arms and tingling or buzzing of the fingers, etc. These new and fresh sensations between the hands are authentic qi, the vital energies created from the interactions of the Yin and the Yang. Similarly, different vital energies can be produced between kidneys, between elbows, knees, between kidneys and heart and so forth in different stages of medical qigong practice.

### **Integrate the Theory with Experience-Cultivating the Internal Energy Matrix**

According to the theory of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), good health exists when the internal body is balanced and harmonized and its “Qi” is flowing freely through the internal Qi pathways or acupuncture meridian system. The true foundation of TCM is Qi and the Qi pathways. Authentic Qi has two aspects: one is vital energy, or life force; the other is information, intelligence, emotions, consciousness, intention, thoughts, images, and memories. Each cell,

each tissue and each organ system carries its own unique Qi, which allows it to perform its unique functions at energetic and informational levels. The Qi pathways function as an internal energy and information network for supporting the body's functions, and for both internal and external communications. Thus, the cultivation and development of the internal energy matrix is the foundation of medical qigong; the formation of the matrix will allow medical qigong practitioners to experience and realize the synchronicity and correspondence between themselves and their clients, students, plants, animals, or universal messages. In medical qigong training, the study of acupuncture meridians should not be limited only to meridian theory via intellectual understanding, but also by cultivating and developing the internal energy matrix--the energy body within--so that medical qigong practitioners will be able to experience the authentic Qi flow along the meridians/internal Qi pathways. This dual attainment leads medical qigong practitioners to integrate the theory with their experience—together--for complete realization. In this kind of learning, experience enters in, wisdom forms, and body energies are remembered and understood as a subject and teaching in their own right, the elements at work in creation are observed, and the archetypal play of mythos comes to life in the practitioner's experiential understanding.

### **Develop Internal Strength and Cultivate the Energetic Transforming Body**

The cultivation and development of the internal energy matrix enables medical qigong practitioners to increase their awareness levels and sensitivity and greatly enhances their intuition and dream quality and capacity. Practitioners become able to feel things they were not able to feel before; they become able to hear things they were not able to hear before; they become able to see things they were not able to see before; and they are able to know things they were not able to know before. Such increased types of awareness and sensitivity not only allows medical qigong practitioners to explore and realize the properties, emotions, memories, intelligence and gifts within, but also greatly enhances communications with others at the energetic, informational, sub-consciousness and unconsciousness levels. This internal awakening provides great opportunities for self-healing and for healing others, but can be overwhelming and

challenging particularly in the beginning and early stages of the internal awakening. In order to overcome increased sensitivity and overwhelming information exchange with others and achieve self-mastery, it is important and necessary to develop the internal strength and cultivate the **energetic transforming body**. For example, the internal power of "Jing" is a dynamic current in the body which can be developed by integrating authentic Qi with the force of the muscles. The power of "Rou" is the flexibility of the body, which can be developed by integrating authentic Qi with the strength of the tendons<sup>14</sup>.

During the internal cultivation and development, one big challenge is overcoming and over-riding the past difficult memories and unhealthy emotional patterns. For example, the emotions are raw energies that have been stored in the internal organs. (Emotions are energetic functions of the internal organs: anger is associated with the functions of the liver; fear is associated with the functions of the kidneys; envy is associated with the functions of the heart; worry is associated with the pancreas; and depression is associated with the lungs, and so forth.) Accumulations of emotional and mental stress often become root causes of chronic illnesses such as chronic pain, fatigue, arthritis, cancer, etc. In order to overcome conditioned emotional responses and transform any unhealthy emotional patterns and tragic memories, it is essential to cultivate and develop the energetic transforming body by means of the codes of the virtues and by learning to apply the five phases of transformation theory within.

Virtue, in Chinese, is called "De (德)." According to the ancient Taoist tradition, one of the ways of emotional and spiritual development is to accumulate De. At the energetic level, the "De (德)-virtue" means to be gaining energy, which represents the power of assembling<sup>15</sup>. For example, Zhuang Zi said: "One's life is the assembling of Qi. The assembling of Qi makes life vital and alive; the dispersal of Qi causes aging and death." This statement not only expresses Zhuang Zi's understanding of the relationship between the Qi and physical body, but also emphasizes the relationship between the Qi and spiritual life<sup>15</sup>. The specific code of virtues resides in the deep layers of each internal organ; for example, benevolence and love in the heart, conscience and justice in the lungs, integrity and loyalty in the liver, and so on. Actual application of the codes of

virtues can greatly affect the internal energy flow, prevent dispersal of qi and energy depletion and lead to healing and health recovery.

With authentic Qi-cultivation and five phases of transformation theory application, practitioners gain experiential understanding of the functions of the internal organs at energetic and emotional levels; they may experience the internal organs from an integrated and interconnected internal organ network that is working together seamlessly with great coordination and collaboration to support each other and help each other.

### **Recalling the Mind, and Establishing the Bright Mirror Within**

The goal of becoming a medical qigong therapist is to heal others or to assist others in healing health conditions and improving the quality of life. In the view of medical qigong, all health care professionals are healers. In a clinical practice, health care professionals not only provide professional care for patients, but also provide compassion and an energy exchange. The energy exchange plays an important role in healing and recovery for their patients. On the other hand, this exchange can create excess stress, energy depletion, and emotional and mental burn-out for the practitioner. Many health care professionals—including nurses, health care givers, doctors of osteopathic medicine, acupuncturists, naturopaths, medical doctors, massage therapists, marriage and family therapists, mental health counselors, psychologists, and social workers, Reiki masters, healing touch therapists and spiritual healers—may not be aware of the impact such repeated energy exchange has, over time, from their professional practice.

For medical qigong therapists, it is important to be aware of the energy and information exchanges between practitioners and patients during the healing sessions. In order to recognize and distinguish the energies, thoughts, images, and information between medical qigong practitioner and patient, it is a significant step to develop and establish the internal mirror. The internal mirror not only assists the medical qigong practitioners to perform excellent diagnosis—to identify and understand the root cause of the health conditions but also helps the medical qigong practitioners to find the optimal treatments for their patients.



The development of an internal bright mirror is essential for medical qigong therapists. However, it is not easy to establish the bright mirror within because practitioners have to train their mind to achieve self-mastery. For example, one of the challenges is to overcome the natural tendencies of the human mind towards curiosity. Curiosity can lead to bewilderment, however, when faced with a world that is suddenly experienced as a communicating world. Curiosity creates an openness, and yet what is encountered may not always be of benefit. In other words, curiosity needs to be managed until the educational process can keep pace with it in a balanced manner. Curiosity may lead the practitioner, otherwise, into spaces where the interpretive capacities may be lacking sufficient clarity to lead to anything but deepening of either past programming, family / cultural conditioning, or perhaps even delusion. It is the mind, in general, that is curious, and would like to inquire around about the state of things. This is why it is necessary, eventually, to learn to Recall the Mind, in order for the consciousness to become concentrated in the body. It doesn't matter whether it is the intellectual mind, or the intuitive / instinctual mind or a combination thereof—Recalling the Mind and training one's curiosity will behoove the process of cultivation and education, for then the practitioners will not have to expend time and energy clearing dirt and mud and dust off the internal mirror; indeed, the internal mirror may become restored to its originally clean state. In it the practitioner may view whatever is necessary and which will become visible if and when necessary.

Recalling the Mind, and Internal Observation in the Mirror are both extremely important attainments for medical qigong therapists. In the tradition of internal cultivation, one of the goals is to transform intellectual intelligence into wisdom (it is called "Zhuan Shi Cheng Zhi" in Chinese-转识成智) and to transform the instinctual intelligence into direct knowing and internal realization (it is called "Jue Ming Sheng Hui" in Chinese-觉明生慧). The process of these transformations requires the following steps: 1) recalling the mind back to the body; 2) adjusting the mind to the *xuan* state for internal observation; 3) integrating authentic Qi with intellectual intelligence; and 4) integrating authentic Qi with instinctual intelligence, including the intuitive mind and the perceptions of the internal organs. These practices strengthen the energy field and

allow the personal mind and energy to integrate and unify with the universal mind and the One Qi, or Cosmic Qi. Dependence on intellect and reason alone will not lead to this attainment! With these attainments, time becomes more like sand; thought becomes more spherical.

It may seem like a conundrum, but the facility of interpreting the communicating world comes about through cultivating detachment, by slowing down the pace of reactivity and conditioned reflexes, and observing patterns with a slower rhythm and the space of objectivity. In other words, habits, reflexes, conditioned impulses become more integrated with the thought processes, and may, thereby, begin to be transformed. In the archetypal and elemental Tao, breathing is different, deeper; the mind is not racing but is calm, and consciousness is recalled to the body. Encounters with the communicating world are, after all, nothing extraordinary, as the cultivator abides in a present moment, naturally attuned to and positioned to synergize with elemental forces with which there has been first-hand contact. The cultivator/practitioner does not lose him or her self in the process of making this contact, but remains aware and retains integrity. This state can be viewed as the "Internal Bright Mirror." In such a state, the senses may be trusted, and may be experienced as reliable and helpful navigators for attaining knowledge. And this is important in terms of applying these arts in healing situations.

### **Conclusion**

For medical qigong practitioners, it is important and necessary to develop their internal energy body, the transforming body, and to establish their internal bright mirror for self-healing, self-care and healing others. Without a well-developed energetic transforming body, health care professionals can easily feel physical fatigue, energy depletion, and emotional and mental burn-out after three to five years of providing their services. Without a well-developed energetic transforming body and internal mirror to serve as a reliable navigating system, after their healing sessions they might exhibit symptoms and behaviors of their patients or clients but may not be aware of it; this may lead to poor health for themselves.

For medical qigong therapists, it is essential to understand the way of healing and health not only at the mental level, but also at the energetic and informational levels. A medical qigong therapist needs to have clear alignment between the intelligence of the internal energy body, the personal mind, and the information communicated within the healing situation. A medical qigong therapist also needs to have clear understanding about the “property” of patients, not only at the physical level but also at energetic, emotional, mental and spiritual levels. During healing sessions, a medical qigong therapist must respect a patient’s property and space at energetic, emotional, mental and spiritual levels and keep clear professional boundaries. A medical qigong therapist works most efficiently and effectively by performing healing sessions in which they are providing service to the soul of the individual but NOT to the unhealthy programs of the individual’s mind or the body. Ultimately, a medical qigong therapist performs healing sessions by synchronizing with universal support, makes the alignment with the principle of the healing truth, and permits synergetic collaborations and resonance between the therapist and patient.

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