

Book Reviews

Traditional, Complementary and Integrative Medicine – an International Reader

Edited by Jon Adams, Gavin J Andrews, Joanne Barnes, Alex Broom and Parker Magin
Palgrave Macmillan, 2012
ISBN 9780230232655

Traditional, complementary and integrative medicine (TCIM) is a concept with various definitions under different circumstances. Although the editors of this book discussed such concepts in the introduction, the desire to define the concept is not the aim and focus of this book. Traditional medicine, complementary medicine and alternative medicine are often considered to have the same meaning and are used interchangeably. It is based on the theories, beliefs and experience indigenous to different cultures. It includes acupuncture, aromatherapy, chiropractic, reflexology, osteopathy, herbalism, homeopathy, naturopathy, massage therapy etc. Integrative medicine indicates the integration of complementary medicine within mainstream conventional medicine.

This book publishes 31 research and review papers written by a group of academics and experts in this field from several countries around the world. The papers have been structured around three overarching parts, each consisting of three interrelated but distinct sections. Part A focuses on TCIM use and consumers; Part B redirects attention to issues of practice, provision and the professional interface and Part C deals with issues around knowledge production, research design and disciplinary perspectives/contexts.

Diversity is one of the features of this book as an international reader. TCIM includes a wide range of practices, products, and

technology in different regions around the world, many practising with a long history. This book collates research papers studying TCIM use in Australia, India, the United States, New Zealand, Vietnam, and so forth. The contributors (or authors) of the papers include many academics and experts from universities and research institutions in Australia, the United States, and Canada in various fields ranging from public health science, health geography, herbal medicine, sociology, health policy research, mental health, primary health care research, naturopathy and law.

Many chapters in this book study TCIM from the view of public health, science and sociology. For instance, Section 1 in Part A focuses on prevalence of use, the profile of users and the drivers/motivations for TCIM use. Another chapter provides the study on the mixed therapy regimens in an Australia suburb obtained from ethnographic examination. In Section 2, the chapter covers studying the use of TCIM through the life cycle: during pregnancy, among paediatric populations, and in later life. In Section 3, papers cover the use of TCIM in certain type of diseases including skin disease (acne), cancer care, mental health and care for people with HIV. The focus is on the impact and influence, opportunities and challenges regarding TCIM from the view of public health research.

TCIM has been utilised in various modalities in different areas around the

world. In Part B, studies evaluating the biopolitics and promotion of traditional herbal medicine in Vietnam; discussing Ayurvedic medicine utilisation in India; and patient health-seeking and practitioner behaviours are included. However, there is very little information about acupuncture and traditional Chinese medicine, despite it being one of most commonly-used TCIM in the world.

Regarding integrative medicine, this book presents chapters focusing on the integrative practices by adopting TCIM therapies, techniques or products and conventional mainstream medicine. For example, one topic explores the dynamics driving and inhibiting communication between primary healthcare clinicians and their patients regarding TCIM. Two additional chapters evaluate the interface role of pharmacists for patients with regard to the use of and information about dietary supplements and natural health products. From my view, these chapters do not fall within the scope of integrative medicine.

One interesting chapter evaluates the variations in provider conceptions of integrative medicine (Chapter 18). The study chose acupuncturists, physicians, chiropractors and physician acupuncturists and conducted in-depth interviews with these practitioners. By analysing the practitioner attitude toward integrative medicine, referral to other practitioners, knowledge of integrative medicine and the practice of integrative medicine, the study shows how a

clinician's orientation toward integrative medicine may be an important factor to measure crucial aspects of integrative medical care. Another interesting chapter (Chapter 19) studies the relationship of TCIM and modern scientific medicine in an integrative medical system. It explores which medicine should be emphasised and which medical standard should be adopted from modern Chinese history. It also indicates that the proper integrative system is dual-standard in which both TCIM and modern scientific medicines are free to operate according to their own medical standards.

Research methodology and design for the TCIM research is another important topic in this book (Part C). Three fascinating chapters (Chapters

21–23) from experts in this field present their opinions about the roles, relevance and relationship between evidence-based medicine and TCIM. In addition to biomedical research approaches, anthropological perspective has been suggested for TCIM research. The strengths and weaknesses of conventional biomedical research strategies and methods applied to TCIM have been explored and a new research framework for assessing these treatment modalities is suggested.

Other interesting chapters are safety and potential risk around TCIM practice and the liberalisation of the regulatory structure of TCIM in Australia comparing with that in the United States, Canada and British Columbia.

Finally, chapters on the perspectives of TCIM in global health and health economics are presented. The future of integrative medicine and the challenges of TCIM research are discussed and several options put forward.

It is worth noting that this book collates previously published research studies or review papers, and most of them are an abridged version of previously published manuscripts. Detailed references are listed following each chapter and presents further information sources for readers and researchers for further exploration on the relevant topic.

Reviewed by Yun-Fei Lu

The Five Levels of Taijiquan

By Grandmaster Chen Xiaowang, Commentary by Master Jan Silberstorff
Singing Dragon, 2012
ISBN 978-1848190931

Millions of people around the world practise the classical internal martial art *Taijiquan*, embodied by myriad styles. No matter what 'dialect' of *Taijiquan* you may practice, gaining a practical understanding of your ability in *Taiji* will always be problematic unless you have the guidance of an expert teacher who has a profound understanding of the art. In writing this text Grandmaster Chen Xiaowang endeavours to explain systematically the complete development of the art of *Taijiquan* in the hope of allowing *Taiji* enthusiasts worldwide to realistically assess their current skill and to provide an insight on how to properly progress. This is a text designed to complement the study of *Taijiquan* with its balance of principles, purposes and difficulties to be encountered in the process of *Taiji* student development. This book contains Chen's Chinese original text with English translation followed by commentary by Master Jan

Silberstorff, a high ranking student and family disciple.

In Chen's text, the path of *Taijiquan* development is described by levels or stages of martial skills (*gongfu*) that progressively support each other, with level one being beginner, through to level five, which is the highest skill level. While fundamentally being a martial art, the training is still applicable for those not interested in the martial arts, as most of the training occurs within the self. Every level of *Taiji* is described by the specific principles that need to be mastered, as well as noting the expected difficulties. The description of these levels serves two purposes: firstly, they help measure the student's current ability, and secondly, assist realisation of what should be learnt next, otherwise advancement at higher stages is not possible. To quote Chen, 'Learning Taijiquan means to educate oneself. It

is like slowly advancing from primary school to university. As time passes, more and more knowledge is gained. Without the foundations of primary school and secondary school, one will not be able to follow the seminars at university'.

The book comprises an introduction followed by five chapters, with each chapter devoted to each of the levels of *Taijiquan*. The introduction contains much useful commentary clarifying the following chapters. The first chapter, hence level one of *Taiji-gongfu*, is focused on learning and mastering the outer physical movements of the form. This chapter explains proper *Taiji* foundation principles of body alignment, correct angles, and arm and leg co-ordination. The idea of sensitivity of internal energy is also introduced in this section. Common deficiencies described include incorrect stances with inadequate or erratic transference of

force through the body and either weak or too tense forms. He also points out that at this stage the student is unable to perform applications with simplicity and ease. Martial skill in this section, is limited and cannot be used effectively for self-defence except by deception.

Level two is focused on revealing blockages and resolving imperfections, such as excessive or insufficient exertion of force and uncoordinated movements. The integration of individual bodily areas and ideas of coordination between the internal, external, opening and closing movements are explored to improve body unity. Chen also introduces the principles of the unique Reeling Silk exercise (*can si gong*) at level two. While there is some discussion of limited martial skill in this section a student at this level is described as 'a new and undisciplined hand'.

At level three, Chen explains that the student will develop better coordination between internal and external movement, with breathing feeling natural. In this stage he notes that movements should appear gentle, but with increasing internal strength. Indeed, the ability to self-correct is possible at this stage. He goes on to note that control of internal qi allows the formation of condensed medium circuits of energy but it is still weak at this stage. *Yi* (awareness) and qi are believed to be more important than movement. The capacity to project one's energy and dissolve opponents' energy develops. It is in this chapter that a deeper understanding of the martial application of the form becomes a focus.

In the fourth chapter, Chen explores level four, *gongfu*. This is a very high level with an understanding of all the applications and martial concepts concealed within the forms movements.

At this stage energy circulation is refined to small spiral movements, and the flow of qi inside the body should be smooth, with every move harmonised with breathing. Chen suggests that there should be a continuous flow of energy between the upper and lower body and that this should form an integrated system. At this level, not only is the practitioner able to read an opponent's intention, but now has the ability to hit the opponent precisely with 'true' force. Chen suggests that 'a person with these capabilities is described as 40 per cent Yin and 60 per cent Yang'.

In level five, every movement is consistent with the principles of *Taijiquan*. Chen draws on the *Taiji* classics to explain: 'With the gentle flow of energy, with the cosmic energy, one's own internal qi moves in a natural way. Moved by a solid form all the way through to the invisible. So no one realizes how marvellous the natural is'. In terms of martial art skills, Chen explains that 'every part of the body should be very sensitive and able to attack like a fist whenever in contact with the opponent'. Furthermore, this level is described as being: 'The only person capable of playing with Yin and Yang without being biased by either of the two'. Even though the student has obtained this level, Chen believes it remains necessary to continue training. In his commentary, Silberstorff notes that Chen is fond of signing books with the phrase, 'Learning is like swimming against the current. If you stop, you move backwards'.

Chen has great knowledge of the art and the poetic *Taijiquan* classics, but chooses to explain the concepts in as practical terms as possible. The text is quite short, containing only what is considered essential to impart to the student. No line is superfluous and it is Silberstorff's

commentary that helps expound the depth behind some of the principles. While many *Taiji* practitioners can relate with the descriptions encountered in the first two chapters, subsequent levels are unfamiliar territory to most. These later chapters will no doubt provide interesting insights into higher level practice and possibly challenge many assumptions. The book mentions specific skills and practices such as '*can si gong*' and qi circulation that are integral to *Taijiquan*; but this is not the purpose of this text. Also practices such as these would require a book of their own to explain.

The Five Levels of Taijiquan is specific to student progression in *Taijiquan* and is essentially a guide but it does assume that one is learning or has learnt from a competent teacher. Considering Silberstorff's suggestion that the majority of the millions of *Taiji* practitioners (students as well as teachers) worldwide are only at level one to the beginning of level two, there is much need for such a book as this. Chen, direct descendant in the nineteenth generation of the *Taijiquan* founder family of Chen, is among the few who are recognised as being qualified to write such a book. The workings of internal systems have always been mysterious and closely guarded, and to have such an accomplished practitioner share his understanding of progression through the levels of *Taijiquan* demonstrates much generosity.

By providing such insights Chen and Silberstorff have provided a gift for the many *Taijiquan* students slowly realising the richness of their art.

Reviewed by Paul Burns

The Acupuncture Handbook of Sports Injuries and Pain

By Whitfield Reaves with Chad Bong
Hidden Needle Press, 2009
ISBN: 9780615274409

While not exactly a new text, being published in 2009, this book deserves a second look! One of the bread and butter areas for acupuncture is musculoskeletal conditions and injuries and this book by two American authors focuses extensively on this area. The information relayed in the book is based on the premise of four steps, or approaches, and the book is categorised into these areas. The first step involves the initial treatment of an acute condition or injury. Readers are given the choice of four approaches: (1) tendino-muscular channel; (2) contralateral; (3) upper or lower extremities; or (4) empirical acupuncture strategies. These approaches are considered simple and straightforward and do not need a precise diagnosis of the injury. The second method involves the use of the channel or microsystems using shu-stream acupoints, traditional acupoint categories, the extraordinary channels and microsystems such as wrist-ankle microsystem. The third approach concerns the role that internal organs (*zangfu*) may play in perpetuating pain and its role in a more holistic approach to

treatment. The final technique suggested treatment at the site of the injury or condition based on the six pathogens (wind, damp etc) or the tissue affected. Each of these approaches is featured in a separate chapter and includes in-depth information relating to needling techniques, selection of acupoints and other clinical comments.

With these strategies explained, the next section of the book looks at individual musculoskeletal conditions; for example Achilles tendinosis, hip pain, elbow pain, and many more. This section makes up the bulk of the text contributing to 25 chapter areas. The final section of the book involves the appendices which include discussions on orthopaedic tests, grading systems for sprains and strains, topical applications, myofascial triggers, and more. Also included in the appendices is a reference list of texts that were used in assembling the information and, on occasions, comments on how useful these texts can be for the practitioner to follow up on.

Two-colour line drawings are used where appropriate to assist the reader in understanding the direction or site of needling especially in relation to the underlying muscles. The spiral binding also allows the book to be laid flat on a table and facilitates ease of use. In summary it is a comprehensive text that has much to offer the experienced practitioner who wants to diversify and add to their repertoire of approaches towards this common area of treatment. What it is not is a text geared for an undergraduate student. The authors assume the reader knows the location of acupoints and has an understanding of channel and *zangfu* theory. It certainly does not reiterate material that can be found in many acupuncture teaching texts. This book is well worth a second look and I found reading it gave me a deeper and more principled way of looking and treating musculoskeletal injuries.

Reviewed by Chris Zaslowski

Tai Chi Imagery Workbook: Spirit, Intent, and Motion

By Martin Mellish
Singing Dragon, 2011
ISBN: 9781848190290

Tai Chi Imagery Workbook: Spirit, Intent, and Motion is not another sequentially pictured instruction manual on Tai Chi forms. In fact, the book does not assume that the reader knows, or is interested in learning, any Tai Chi form. The author, Martin Mellish, aims to communicate the practical wisdom underlying Tai Chi to increase awareness of the mind-

body relationship and reduce unneeded tension. It attempts this by using creative imagined scenarios coupled with pictures and diagrams. Scenarios with imagery such as moving animals, solid mountains, spinal columns as strings of pearls and bowls of fruit in the pelvis are used to engage the reader's many senses to produce meaningful physical awareness.

This book would be useful not only to the student of Tai Chi, but also of any healing modality, dance, sport, meditation or conscious physical art.

The book is divided into three parts: Structure, Spirit, and Application with many sub-headings in each part. Contained in Part One is an abundance

of playful mental imagery analogies of the body with supporting pictures. These have a direct relation to fundamental movement concepts under headings such as 'Stepping and Standing', 'The Centre', 'Spinal Alignment', 'Movement of Shoulders, and Arms and Hands'. Familiar imagery examples often used in Tai Chi such as 'a golden cord attached to the crown of your head' and spinal column like a 'string of pearls' through to contemporary imagery such as, 'playing the accordion', are provided with many others to prompt the reader's imagination and resonate a personal physical understanding.

Part Two is focused on the releasing of physical and mental tensions that limit one's potential. Exercises in this section recognise the need to develop awareness of voluntary tensions and thus Mellish suggests it must be a conscious choice to change or let go. The idea of the *Dao De Jing* state of *wu bu wei* (something like 'beyond both effort and non-effort') is the quality these images aim to develop.

Part Three attempts to integrate the ideas developed in parts one and

two. Mellish describes, with modern interpretations, how to connect to and develop physical power as described in the Tai Chi classics. With a background in science and mathematics, Mellish uses familiar scenarios and physics to get this across. The biggest chapter here is on 'Push Hands' (*Tui Shou*). Mellish considers Push Hands to offer some of the deepest insights of the Tai Chi tradition, and suggests that without it, 'you have no objective test for whether your movement is correct or not'. A fascinating insight into hard-earned Push Hand principles is revealed, with some memorable Push Hand encounters. Weapons are also discussed in Part Three.

Also included are mathematical notes, scientific research on Tai Chi and the bibliography of books that have influenced many of the ideas in *Tai Chi Imagery Workbook: Spirit, Intent, and Motion*. The mathematical notes explain the physics rendered throughout the book, whereas the scientific research exhibits some of the emerging benefits of Tai Chi and some of the factors that distort the results of such research.

Mellish writes in an easy to follow manner, using a format that alternates between imagined scenarios, illustrations, pictures and underlying explanations in the form of anatomical, scientific, psychological, and personal anecdotes. On integrating imagery and engaging in the scenarios I was able to feel many of the exercises' principles such as improved balance, strength, and relaxation. Mellish's ability to communicate such physical ideas in a book form is admirable but I do feel the sheer amount of exercises and visual ideas contained here would also transfer suitably into an audio visual format, as I found myself constantly flipping through the pages to recall imagery cues. Overall it is a cleverly written book that achieves its aim of instigating an aware physical experience. It would be a great resource to students or teachers of any coordinated body movement.

Reviewed by Paul Burns

Note: *Taiji* has been referred to as tai chi in this review for consistency with the book's title.