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New Research Poster: Use of Tai Chi Can Improve Resilience, Quality of Life, Cognition in Depressed Older Adults

NEW ORLEANS (May 24, 2010) — Use of Tai Chi, a mind-body exercise, in combination with antidepressants provides additional improvements in older adults with depression, according to new research being presented at the American Psychiatric Association's Annual Meeting.

Older adults with depression are at increased risk for decline in health functioning, morbidity and mortality, including suicide. Fewer than half of elderly depressed patients achieve remission and functional recovery in response to initial use of antidepressants alone.

Researchers Helen Lavretsky, M.D., M.S., and Michael Irwin, M.D. at UCLA studied a group of older adults with major depression and compared the use of an antidepressant combined with use of Tai-Chi-Chih (TCC, a brief standardized version of Tai Chi) to the use of an antidepressant combined with a health education program. The older adults each participated in two hours per week of either Tai Chi or the health education program.

The research poster (#NR3-70) was scheduled May 24, 3 to 5 p.m., in room La Louisiane C at the Morial Convention Center at the APA Annual Meeting in New Orleans.

The Tai Chi and health education participants demonstrated comparable improvement in the severity of depression. However, people in the Tai Chi group demonstrated significantly greater improvement in resilience, health-related quality of life, and cognitive function (memory, attention, and executive function).

Tai-Chi intervention has an advantage in that it is easily translatable to the community and can be readily implemented among adults with physical limitations. Researchers concluded that “complementary mind-body interventions can improve partial response to antidepressants via stress-reduction, improved physical functioning, increased socialization, and reduced risks of polypharmacy.”

The APA's 163rd Annual Meeting, the world's largest psychiatric meeting, will run Saturday, May 22 to Wednesday, May 26, 2010 in New Orleans. The program features 10 prominent lecturers, more than 300 educational sessions, and more than 700 new research posters.

The American Psychiatric Association is a national medical specialty society whose physician members specialize in the diagnosis, treatment, prevention and research of mental illnesses including substance use disorders. Visit the APA at www.psych.org and www.HealthyMinds.org.