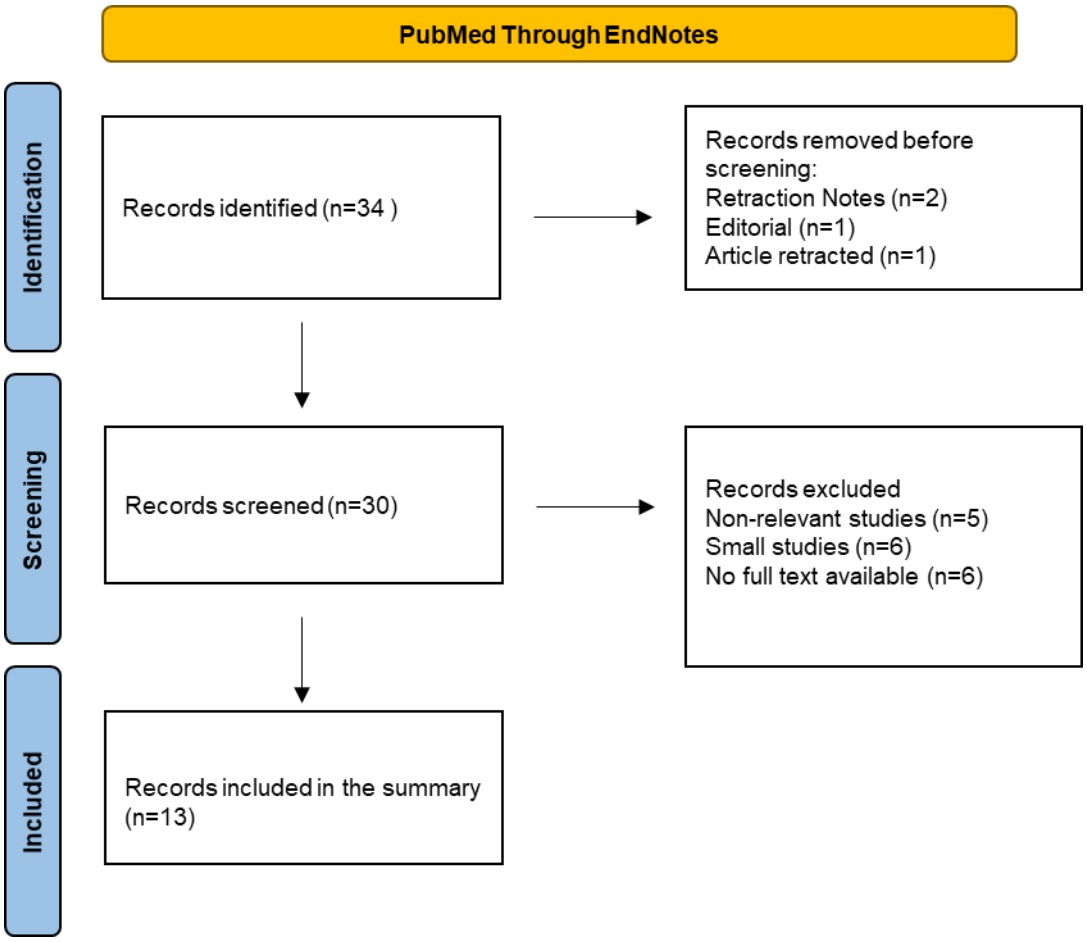
Qi Gong literature search

Search criteria

- Databases Pubmed (search done in EndNotes) and Cochrane Library (no result from this one)
- Sear terms “Qigong” AND “ Cancer”
- Time from 2017 to 2022
- Full text available
- Search limited to reviews, systematic reviews and meta-analysis and Randomized controlled trials of more than 50 patients.
- Design papers have been considered for awareness of current research on the topic.

Search results



Excerpts from the different articles

Review articles on any kind of cancer patients

The purpose of this review was to explore the theory, evidence base, and practice of Qigong for individuals with cancer. Questions addressed were: What is qigong? How does it work? What evidence exists supporting its practice in integrative oncology? What barriers to wide-spread programming access exist? The authors concluded that regular practice of Qigong exercise therapy has the potential to improve cancer-related QOL and is indirectly linked to cancer prevention and survival. Wide-spread access to quality Qigong in cancer care programming may be challenged by the availability of existing programming and work force capacity (Klein 2017)

The purpose of the review was to explore the clinical effects of the explore the clinical effects of the Baduanjin[1] Qigong exercise among cancer patients. The authors concluded that Baduanjin exercise had positive clinical effects on cancer patients. This meta-analysis not only supported that the Baduanjin exercise can alleviate the degree of cancer-related fatigue in patients but also improved their quality of life and sleep quality. Further long-term follow-up randomized controlled trials are warranted.(Kuo, Wang et al. 2021)

The purpose of the review was to summarize and critically evaluate the effects of Tai Chi and Qigong (TCQ) mind-body exercises on symptoms and quality of life (QOL) in cancer survivors. Despite the inconsistent methodologic quality of some of the reviewed studies the authors found that TCQ was associated with significant improvement in fatigue, sleep difficulty, depression, and overall QOL; a statistically non-significant trend was observed for pain. TCQ shows promise in addressing cancer-related symptoms and QOL in cancer survivors however larger and methodologically sound trials with longer follow-up periods and appropriate comparison groups are needed before definitive conclusions can be drawn, and cancer- and symptom-specific recommendations can be made.(Wayne, Lee et al. 2018)

Review article on breast cancer patients

The purpose of this review was to evaluate the effectiveness of Qigong in improving the quality of life and relieving fatigue, sleep disturbance, and cancer-related emotional disturbances (distress, depression, and anxiety) in women with breast cancer. Despite the inconsistent methodologic quality of some of the reviewed studies the authors found that Qigong has significant effectiveness on quality of life as well as on depression and anxiety relief. They did not find significant benefit on fatigue or sleep disturbance relief compared to that observed in the control group. The authors concluded that Qigong is beneficial for improving quality of life and relieving depression and anxiety and thus, should be encouraged in women with breast cancer.(Meng, Hu et al. 2021)

Randomized Controlled Trials (RCTs) or controlled trial

Colorectal cancer (RCT)

The study purpose was to examine the effects of the Baduanjin qigong on patients with colorectal cancer and cancer related fatigue (CRF) and to explore its intervention effects. 90 patients with chemotherapy-treated colorectal cancer and CRF were randomized to a Baduanjin exercise group or a routine care group.

[1] Baduanjin is a traditional Chinese Qigong exercise for health improvement

The authors concluded that Baduanjin qigong exercise can relieve CRF in patients with colorectal cancer undergoing chemotherapy and can improve their physical activity level and their quality of sleep.(Lu, Qu et al. 2019)

Lung cancer (RCT)

The study purpose was to investigate the effects of Qigong for the management of a symptom cluster comprising fatigue, dyspnea, and anxiety in patients with lung cancer. 156 patients with lung cancer were randomized to a Qigong group (6 weeks of intervention) or a waitlist control group receiving usual care. The authors concluded that Qigong did not alleviate the symptom cluster experience. Nevertheless, this intervention was effective in reducing dyspnea and cough, and improving QOL. More than 6 weeks were needed, however, for detecting the effect of Qigong on improving dyspnea. Furthermore, men benefited more than women. It may not be beneficial to use Qigong to manage the symptom cluster consisting of fatigue, dyspnea, and anxiety, but it may be effective in managing respiratory symptoms.(Molassiotis, Vu et al. 2021)

Prostate cancer (RCT)

The study purpose was to investigate the effect of qigong/tai chi (QGTC) on Sleep disturbances and fatigue in prostate cancer patients undergoing radiotherapy. 90 patients with prostate cancer were randomized to one of three groups: (1) QGTC; (2) light exercise (LE); or (3) wait list control (WLC). The authors concluded that QGTC during radiation for prostate cancer resulted in superior sleep duration midway through radiation, but this effect was not durable and there were no differences in other domains of sleep or fatigue (McQuade, Prinsloo et al. 2017).

Breast Cancer (CT)

This cross-sectional exploratory study aimed to compare the bone mineral density (BMD), balance performance, balance self-efficacy, and number of falls between breast cancer survivors who practiced qigong, breast cancer survivors who did not practice qigong, and healthy individuals. The study included 40 breast cancer survivors with more than 3 months of qigong experience, 17 breast cancer survivors with no qigong experience, and 36 healthy controls.The authors found that The lumbar spine, total hip, femoral neck, and total radius BMDs were similar between the 3 groups. The breast cancer-qigong performed better than the control group for the one-leg stand test and they also had a higher balance self-efficacy score. Nevertheless, these were no differences between the numbers of falls between the 3 groups. The authors concluded that Qigong may be a suitable exercise for improving the balance performance and balance self-efficacy of breast cancer survivors (Fong, Choi et al. 2018).

Design papers

The search yielded several design (protocol) papers that we are listing here to provide an overview on the ongoing research in this field.

- Study protocol on comparative effectiveness of mindfulness meditation and qigong on psychophysiological outcomes for patients with colorectal cancer: a randomized controlled trial (Ho, Wan et al. 2017).
- Biobehavioral effects of Tai Chi Qigong in men with prostate cancer: Study design of a three-arm randomized clinical trial (Kinney, Blair et al. 2019).

- Effects of Qigong, Tai Chi, acupuncture, and Tuina on cancer-related fatigue for breast cancer patients: A protocol of systematic review and meta-analysis (Li, Wang et al. 2020).
- Effectiveness of qigong and tai chi in the quality of life of patients with cancer: protocol for an umbrella review (Xu, Li et al. 2022).
- Protocol for the MATCH study (Mindfulness and Tai Chi for cancer health): A preference-based multi-site randomized comparative effectiveness trial (CET) of Mindfulness-Based Cancer Recovery (MBCR) vs. Tai Chi/Qigong (TCQ) for cancer survivors (Carlson, Zelinski et al. 2017).