

Project Title: Effects of Tai Chi on Physical Performance, Functional Limitation and Disability

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I am Beverly Roberts and am the Annabel Davis Jenks Professor in the College of Nursing at the University of Florida. I recently joined the faculty of the University of Florida after 23 years in the School of Nursing at Case Western Reserve University where I held numerous administrative positions and an endowed chair. I obtained my BSN from the University of Michigan, my MSN from Wayne State University and my PhD from Case Western Reserve University. I have been actively involved in aging research for 27 years and have received numerous awards for my research.



The study I would like to do at Oak Hammock is designed to assess the effects of a 16-week tai chi exercise intervention on performance of daily activities and physical and psychological health. While aerobic exercise (e.g., walking, swimming) and strength training have improved physical abilities and psychological health, they have had small effects of the performance of daily activities.

Tai chi was selected for this study because older adults can engage safely in this low-intensity exercise. The tai chi movements incorporate controlled complex motor movements that replicate those used in daily activity and challenge balance involved in daily activities. Hence, tai chi may have a greater impact on daily activities than aerobic or muscle strengthening exercises. Our goal is to determine what effects tai chi has on the performance of daily activities and physical and mental health.

We are looking for persons who are not currently involved in regular exercise (30 minutes 3 or more times a week) and have difficulty climbing 10 steps or walking ¼ mile. We will measure of daily activities and physical and psychological health. One group will be randomly assigned to a 16-week tai chi intervention that will meet 3 times a week for 1 hour. The other group will maintain their normal activity during this 16-week time. All participants will have measurements made before and after the 16-week period. The second group then will take part in the 16-week tai chi intervention and have the measurements done after this exercise training.