

# Incorporating Artificial Intelligence and Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) into a Western Medical Practice: A Case Study

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## ABSTRACT

The goal of this study was to provide some guidance on how western medical practitioners can incorporate artificial intelligence (AI) and traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) into their medical practice. Artificial intelligence has become an increasingly popular adjunct to medical practices in recent years and will probably be used even more frequently in the years to come. It has an increasingly large number of applications to a wide range of medical specialties and can make medical practices more efficient in operation and can also aid in medical research. Two chatbots, Microsoft Copilot and Elicit were used to demonstrate how AI can be used in medical research. The first step was to find relevant research studies. The second step was to use AI to summarize one of the research studies that had been published in a medical journal. The topic to be researched was dawu (a.k.a. Da Wu), a set of qigong exercises, to see what kind of studies had been made of this tool of traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). One relevant study was found. The PubMed database was then utilized to find the article and Elicit was used to summarize the study's findings. Elicit did a decent job of summarizing the study's findings, but the depth and detail were not adequate to satisfy the researcher, who then decided to read the entire article in order to write up a more complete summary. The conclusion was that artificial intelligence can be utilized as a tool of medical research, but it should only be the starting point of such research. It can be used as a way to find and summarize relevant research, but AI has not yet developed sufficiently to go farther. Human brains still must be used to carry the research beyond the initial stages.

**Keywords:** Dawu; Tai Chi; Qigong; Traditional Chinese Medicine; TCM; Artificial Intelligence; Elicit; Copilot

## Introduction

The goal of this study is to provide some guidance on how western medical practitioners can incorporate artificial intelligence (AI) and traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) into their medical practice. Artificial intelligence has become an increasingly popular adjunct to medical practices in recent years and will probably be used even more frequently in the years to come [1-27]. It has an increasingly large number of applications to a wide range of medical specialties and can make medical practices more efficient in operation. Traditional Chinese medicine has been used for centuries to treat or cure a wide range of ailments [28-54]. Its focus has been on prevention rather than treatment, but it has also been used to treat existing ailments. TCM has several branches, the most important of which are acupuncture, acupressure, herbal concoctions, tai chi and qigong exercises.

Due to space limitations, we shall confine our discussion to tai chi and qigong applications. AI can be used to quickly find basic information on many medical topics, although care must be taken when reading the results of an AI-generated search, since prior studies have found that results have not always been accurate [55].

The quality of AI search findings will undoubtedly improve over time, but we are not yet at the stage where we can totally trust their results. AI-generated searches can be used as a starting point for information retrieval but should not be the final step in any research project. AI chatbots can be used to generate summary information on particular topics. To show how chatbots can be used in this manner, I have decided to use Microsoft Copilot [56], one of the better chatbots as of this writing. Using a chatbot to do the preliminary work saves much time because practitioners who are not familiar with the topic -

qigong and tai chi in this case -- can be spared the time and trouble of reading hundreds or thousands of pages of explanatory literature on the topic [57-69]. The way to generate information is to give the chat-bot a command or instruction. The instruction in this case might be: "Give a brief summary of tai chi and qigong. What are their common features and what are their differences?"

## The Reply

Certainly! Let's delve into the fascinating world of Tai Chi and Qigong, two ancient Chinese practices that share common roots but also exhibit distinct characteristics. Here's a concise exploration of their key features and differences:

### 1. Historical Background and Evolution

#### o Tai Chi

- Developed in the 16th century by Chen Wangting, a retired warrior, Tai Chi (or Tai Chi Chuan) initially served as a martial art form.
- Over time, it evolved, drawing influences from Taoist and Confucian philosophies. It transformed into a practice that includes self-defense techniques, meditation, and a harmonious balance between mind and body.
- Different styles of Tai Chi, such as Yang, Wu, and Sun, emerged, each with unique characteristics while retaining core principles of fluidity, control, and relaxation.

#### o Qigong

- Qigong's history dates back over 5,000 years, making it one of the oldest forms of health care globally.
- Rooted deeply in traditional Chinese medicine, philosophy, and martial arts, Qigong was initially practiced for spiritual growth and longevity.
- It emphasizes breathing techniques, gentle movements, and meditation. Over time, various forms of Qigong have evolved, each serving different health and spiritual purposes.

### 2. Movement Style and Practice

#### o Tai Chi

- Characterized by a series of flowing, interconnected movements or forms.
- Examples include the Yang style, known for its gentle, wide-ranging motions, and the Chen style, which incorporates more explosive movements and greater physicality.
- Each Tai Chi movement, such as "Wave Hands Like Clouds" or "Grasp the Sparrow's Tail," has a specific posture and sequence, often carrying symbolic meanings.

- Practicing Tai Chi feels like a slow, meditative dance, demanding precision and fluidity.
- #### o Qigong
- Involves simpler, repetitive movements or static postures that are easier to learn and execute.
  - Examples include "Lifting the Sky," a movement for stimulating energy flow, and "Standing Like a Tree," a meditative posture for grounding and centering.
- ### 3. Purpose and Emphasis
- #### o Tai Chi
- Originating as a martial art, Tai Chi emphasizes self-defense, coordination, and balance.
  - It requires significant time and dedication to master due to its complexity.
- #### o Qigong
- Rooted in spiritual and healing practices, Qigong provides a more accessible and varied approach.
  - It focuses on internal healing, stress relief, and energy cultivation.
  - Qigong is suitable for those seeking longevity, health, and maximum human potential.

In summary, while Tai Chi offers a structured approach to body-mind integration, Qigong provides a more accessible path, emphasizing internal healing and energy flow. Both practices contribute to overall well-being, catering to diverse personal needs and preferences.

## Author Comment

In the present author's opinion, these summaries are good enough for a medical practitioner who is unfamiliar with these exercise sets to obtain a basic understanding of the similarities and differences between these two tools of Chinese medicine practitioners. Both tai chi and qigong awaken and energize the body's natural healing power, which then flows to the affected area. Western medical practitioners who would like to incorporate one or more of these exercise sets into a practice would be wise to seek out the services of a tai chi or qigong practitioner who has several years of experience practicing and using some of these sets. One way to find such practitioners would be to contact a kung fu or tai chi school in the local area. The people in these schools can probably put you in touch with one or more practitioners.

## The Study

Baduanjin is the most frequently used set of qigong exercises used in medical research [30,42,54] but it is not the only one. The Chinese Health Qigong Association has instruction manuals on several

other sets of medical qigong exercises [70-77]. I decided to search the PubMed database [78] to see if some of these other exercise sets had been used in medical research. My first search term was “Da Wu,” one of the other sets of qigong exercises suggested by the Chinese Health Qigong Association. My search using that key word turned up empty. No medical studies could be found that included this key word in either the title or abstract. The Chinese often combine several words when the Chinese characters are translated into English, so I decided to do a search using the key word “dawu.” This time I was able to find one study that used Da Wu, as well as some other qigong exercise sets. It was a comparative study that evaluated the results of several different sets of qigong exercise sets, of which Da Wu was one, and compared those results to those of a no exercise group and an aerobic exercise group [79]. I next went to Elicit AI [80], another artificial intelligence bot, to see if I could find additional studies. I gave it the following command: “Find medical studies that incorporated the use of dawu, also called da wu, a set of qigong exercises, to treat or cure a disease or ailment.”

It gave me a summary and citation for eight studies on the health benefits of qigong, none of which included dawu in the title or abstract [81-88]. This search exercise provided a good example of how chatbots can give imperfect or irrelevant information. In this case, the information was not totally irrelevant because it gave good summaries of qigong studies other than dawu. A close look at the references shows that the chatbot sometimes gave incomplete references that did not follow acceptable APA or other format. I decided not to correct these flaws so that the reader could see what the actual references looked like that were generated by the chatbot.

## Summary

At this point I decided to use the “Extract data from PDFs” feature of Elicit. This feature provides a summary of the contents of PDF documents, which can be a big time-saver for researchers. I uploaded the Gao, et al. [79] article [81], since that was the only article I could find that was on point. Elicit gave me the following summary: “The summary is that the study systematically reviewed the effects of different traditional Chinese exercises on blood lipids in middle-aged and elderly individuals, highlighting the potential of WQX as the best TCE treatment for dyslipidemia, emphasizing the importance of managing lipid profiles in this population.” The problem with this summary is that the reader is not told what the abbreviations stand for, making it necessary to read the paper to obtain this information. However, the summary did provide some useful information.

## Main Findings

I then asked it to give me the main findings. This is what it gave me: “WQX and TJQ were found to be effective in improving blood lipid indicators, with WQX being ranked as the best intervention, followed by BDJ.” Again, Elicit did not disclose what the abbreviations stood for, making it necessary to read the paper. However, a summary of the main findings was not without value. It did disclose the fact that some

exercises were effective, and that some exercises were more effective than others.

## Methodology

I next clicked on the link for Methodology. This is what Elicit gave me. “The methodology involved searching Chinese and English databases, creating a search strategy using MeSH terms, keywords, and phrases, defining inclusion and exclusion criteria based on PICOS, and having two researchers independently review and evaluate the selected articles.” Elicit provided many other summary links as well, including:

- Intervention
- Outcome measured
- Limitations
- Intervention effects
- Summary of introduction
- Summary of discussion
- Study design
- Study objectives
- Theoretical framework
- Research question
- Research gaps
- Hypotheses tested
- Future research
- Funding source
- Dataset
- Study count
- Independent variables
- Dependent variables
- Measured variables
- Region
- Duration
- Statistical techniques
- Experimental techniques
- Algorithms
- Software used
- Participant count
- Population characteristics
- Participant age
- Population sex
- Organism
- Policy recommendations

Because I determined that the summary provided by Elicit did not give the details or the depth that I had hoped for, I decided to actually read the paper so that I would be able to write my own summary, which is as follows:

- Gao, et al. [81] examined the effect of six traditional Chinese exercises on blood lipids on middle-aged and elderly patients. The exercises included in the study were tai chi (taijiquan), wuqinxi, baduanjin, liuzijue, yijinjing and dawu. The results were measured against a no exercise group and an aerobic exercise group. The results were as follows:
  - For HDL-C, liuzijue, baduanjin, taijiquan and wuqinxi were superior to the no exercise group ( $p < 0.05$ ). Differences in mean scores for the other two Chinese exercises compared to the no exercise group were not significant.
  - For LDL-C, almost all Chinese exercises showed statistical differences in reducing LDL-C levels compared to the no exercise and aerobic exercise groups.
  - All six Chinese exercises were effective in improving blood lipid indicators.
  - Wuqinxi and taijiquan “can be effective for all four blood lipid indicators and seem to be recommended as the most appropriate way for the elderly to exercise.”
  - The rankings indicated that wuqinxi was the most effective in improving blood lipids.
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## Concluding Comment

The main finding of the present study is that Elicit, an artificial intelligence bot, can be used as a good starting point for further medical research. Not only was it able to provide a decent short summary of findings for a long and technical article, but it was also able to focus on a wide range of subaspects of the study, making it easier for medical researchers to determine the contents and value of a study without first having to read the entire study. However, I had to read the study in order to obtain the level of depth and detail that I wanted because the summary provided by Elicit was inadequate for my needs. Elicit can be used as a screening process, a first step, that can save time and effort for medical researchers. Upon reading the summary, I was able to determine that the article was worth reading in its entirety.

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