Sitting Tai Chi: A Mind-Body Exercise for staff wellness

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Introduction
Hospital work is known to be physically and psychologically strenuous. Tai Chi is a popular martial art and good for promoting physical health and reducing mental stress. However, traditional Tai Chi forms are difficult to learn and require place to practice. A recent randomized control study showed an adapted form of Tai Chi namely “12-form sitting Tai Chi (坐式太極十二式)” provided similar health benefits. In view of this, “12-form sitting Tai Chi” was introduced in Tuen Man hospital aiming at promoting staff wellness.

Objectives
To increase staff’s awareness on physical and psychological health. To introduce “12-form sitting Tai Chi” to promote regular exercise habit in workplace.

Methodology
This 12-form sitting Tai Chi was originally designed by physiotherapists and an experienced Tai Chi master at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. These 12 forms sitting Tai Chi were derived from the classic long-form Tai Chi of Yang’s style and constitute its representative components by encouraging trunk, upper limbs and some of the lower limb movements using the mind to control the body. It could be performed entirely while seating and completed in about 3 minutes. The sitting Tai Chi classes were conducted at the hospital by a physiotherapist. Each class has two sessions and each session lasted for 60 minutes. Participants were given the DVD booklet to facilitate self-revision. Self-administrated questionnaires were distributed for program evaluation. Comment and feedback on staff perception to the sitting Tai Chi was collected at the end of program.

Result
Three classes (6 sessions) were conducted since 2013. Nearly 80 staff expressed
interest in participating. Twenty-nine staff (4 male and 25 female) of various ages participated and their data were analyzed. All respondents gave a rating of “satisfied” or above to the program as a whole. 95% of the respondent will continue to practice the sitting Tai Chi after completion of course. All participants appreciated the program and agreed that sitting Tai Chi can be easily practiced at workplace. Other comments included: sitting Tai Chi refreshed my mind, longer session duration (e.g. 90 min) was preferred, continued to make offerings for staff with different Tai Chi styles, and considering standing Tai Chi form. Conclusion: This modified seated version of Tai Chi can be enjoyed by people who wish to practice Tai Chi in sitting. This safe easy-to-learn exercise improves health and quality of life which is suitable for self-practicing at workplace particularly for people who sit for long duration at work. (e.g. computer users, clerical workers etc.). It provides an alternative choice of exercise for enhancing staff wellness.