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Monday, June 28, 2010

To whom it may concern,

I am writing this letter in support of Tai Chi as an effective way of reduce the risk of falls in older people. I base this support on a study that I conducted from 2000-2006, *The Central Sydney Tai Chi Trial*, funded by the NSW Department of Health. The results of the trial were reported in a peer-reviewed article in the prestigious Journal of the American Geriatrics Society.<sup>1</sup> While the article reports all of the outcome measures, it does not include much detail regarding the implementation of the Tai Chi program.

The Central Sydney study planned the randomised controlled trial around Tai Chi programs as they would be delivered in the community in order to maximize the generalisability of results to community settings. An important factor in implementing this study was to use instructors typically found in the community, regardless of Tai Chi style. Of the 76 Tai Chi programs taught by 22 instructors, 58 (76%) were *Tai Chi for Arthritis* (TCA) based on Sun-style Tai Chi. They were taught by instructors certified in TCA by Dr. Paul Lam's Tai Chi for Health. A pamphlet describing the movements in the TCA program is being forwarded to you for consideration for inclusion in the CDC Falls Compendium. This description of movements was used to train and certify instructors and ensure quality control during implementation of the study. The other Tai Chi programs used were 5 (7%)

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<sup>1</sup> Voukelatos A, Cumming RG, Lord SR, Rissel C. A randomized, controlled trial of tai chi for the prevention of falls: the Central Sydney tai chi trial. *J Am Geriatr Soc.* 2007 Aug;55(8):1185-91.

Sun (non TCA), 2 (3%) Yang and 11 (14%) mixed styles.

The Tai Chi programs in this study were well received in the community. Altogether 702 study participants received the Tai Chi programs, a further 300 people not in the study also attended these programs reflecting significant community interest and the willingness to pay for them. In fact, if it wasn't for the limited grant budget many more people would have been in the Tai Chi program. Many participants reported various beneficial effects of Tai Chi on their health and functioning during daily activities. Many of these Tai Chi programs continue to operate, 10 years after the beginning of the study.

The Sydney study is the largest and also the first adequately powered study to include *Tai Chi for Arthritis* in assessing the effectiveness of Tai Chi in reducing the risk of falls. Although the effects attributable to *Tai Chi for Arthritis* cannot be delineated, its contribution to fall prevention would be expected to outweigh the effects of the other styles used in this study because it comprised the majority of the Tai Chi programs used.

Sincerely,



Dr. Alexander Voukelatos  
Chief Investigator  
Central Sydney Tai Chi Trial