

# ACC and tai chi

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At the conclusion of a second survey run in December 2004 in the *New Zealand Family Physician (NZFP)*, it was great to see that certain areas of falls prevention knowledge had reportedly increased. In particular, the recognition of strength and balance programmes to help prevent falls in older adults improved from 86% to 92%. There was also a 12% increase in correctly identifying other proven strategies to reduce falls compared to the baseline survey.

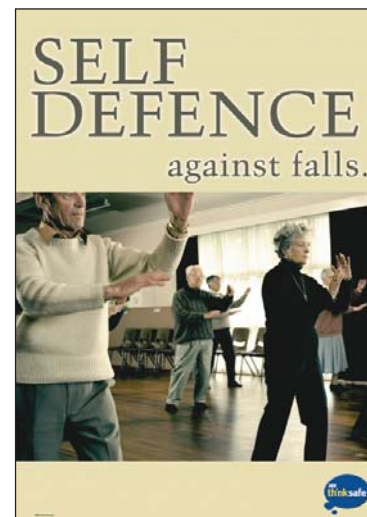
ACC funds and supports two primary strength and balance programmes nationally (namely the Otago exercise programme and ACC funded modified tai chi). In the last year, more than 8000 older people attended modified tai chi classes supported by ACC.

ACC became the lead agency promoting modified tai chi because of the growing body of evidence that its practice improves strength and balance and thus helps prevent falls.

ACC-supported classes are open to people 65 and over, or 55-plus for Maori and Pacific people. Most attend courses after a referral from their GP, usually because they have had a fall in the last 12 months.

To help the screening process, the Auckland University of Technology is developing a screening tool for the programme to help providers more accurately determine whether ACC-funded modified tai chi is suitable for a particular older adult. The tool is in the development stage and will be available for a community trial in approximately three months.

Given a quarter of New Zealanders will be 65 or older by 2039, the growth of modified tai chi in this age group will do much to encourage a healthier and more independent older population that will also enjoy benefits such as reduced susceptibility to hypertension.<sup>1,2,3</sup> Last year, ACC provided funding for 213 classes of-



fered by 38 providers, some of whom requested a 'gold coin' donation to help meet costs.

It is anticipated that participants who have attended a course of the programme will realise its many benefits and therefore be committed to long-term involvement.

For more information about the ACC supported tai chi programme, including what's available in your area, please visit **[www.acc.co.nz](http://www.acc.co.nz)** or call **0800 THINKSAFE**.

ACC also funds and supports the development of the falls prevention information provided by the CME club website for physicians. To search the latest evidence-based material on falls management visit **[www.cmeclub.auckland.ac.nz](http://www.cmeclub.auckland.ac.nz)**.

## References

1. Sun WY, Dosch M, Gilmore GD, et al. Effects of a tai chi chuan program on Hmong American Adults. *Educational Gerontology*. 1996; 22: 161-167
2. Chen, W. and Sun, W. Tai chi chuan, an alternative form of exercise for health promotion and disease prevention for older adults in the community. *International Quarterly of Community Health Education* 1997; 16(4):333-339.
3. Wang CW, Collet JP, Lau J. The effect of tai chi on health outcomes in patients with chronic conditions. *Archives of Internal Medicine*. 2004;164:493-501.

*Due to an editorial oversight, part of the ACC paper on tai chi programmes in the October issue of the journal was missing. We apologise to both the author David Campbell and to ACC for this, and have reproduced the complete paper above. Editor.*