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Using Qigong--Chinese internal energy exercises--to help fight cancer



- By [runestone0](#)
- Posted January 31, 2009 at 4:48 pm · 4 replies
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I survived four bouts of bone lymphoma, stage four, back in the early nineties. I had two stem cell transplants. I used meditation and qigong, especially standing post meditation, to help beat the disease. I've been clear for over 12 years, and I do the standing post every day.

Does anyone else use qigong as a complementary treatment?

- Newest first



- By [runestone0](#)
- Posted February 5, 2009 at 4:04 am
- [Report post](#)
- Hi,

Here's an article I wrote a few years ago:

Fighting Cancer With Chi Kung Mind/Body Exercises

By Bob Ellal

Chi kung means "energy study." It's an ancient Chinese art used to bring health to the body, calm to the mind, and power to the martial arts. It's based on the same theory as acupuncture: That there are energy pathways—meridians and channels—that flow throughout the body. When energy, or chi, runs smoothly in these pathways, good health is maintained. When energy becomes blocked or stagnant, illness follows. Through various combinations of breathing, postures and movements, chi kung attempts to keep energy pathways open.

When I was diagnosed with Stage Four bone lymphoma cancer in 1991, I read everything I could about people who had survived supposedly hopeless cases of the deadly disease. One common thread ran through the survivor stories: People who had beaten aggressive, late-stage instances of the disease had found ways to use their minds to help their bodies heal. So I learned how to meditate, and how to use visualizations to help my immune system attack the cancer cells. And against all odds, I survived six months of an intense regime of chemotherapy and came out cancer free.

But it didn't last. The cancer came back. The doctors scheduled me for a stem cell transplant, in which stem cells, precursor of your immune system, are harvested from your blood, and then high-dose chemotherapy destroys your immune system (bone marrow) and hopefully all the cancer cells in your body. Then the stem cells are replaced to recreate your immune system. Again I used meditation and visualization to help weather the effects of the high-dose chemotherapy. I sailed through the transplant in record time and came out of the hospital cancer-free.

But a year later the cancer relapsed and the doctors recommended a second stem cell transplant, this time a regime that was several times more intense than the first. It was time to bring out the big guns. I read more about meditation and visualization and discovered that the Chinese had been using mind/body techniques for thousands of years. They called this art "chi kung."

After reading a book about chi kung by a noted Boston chi kung, tai chi chuan and kung fu master named Dr. Yang Jwing-Ming, I decided to contact him to arrange for lessons. Coincidentally, at that time his disciple (a formal title denoting years of commitment and study) Ramel Rones (Rami) was teaching classes in Connecticut. I approached him and asked him to teach me chi kung. Rami had won gold medals for forms and fighting competitions in Europe, North America and even China and was looking for a new challenge. So I became his private student.

Rami quickly introduced me to standing post meditation. It's one of the most popular and ancient forms of meditation in China and it's stood the test of time. It's also one of the most difficult, as it challenges both the body and mind. Standing post gets its name from its posture: The practitioner stands as though he or she is a post rooted into the ground, knees slightly bent, arms held in an arc in front of the chest. This posture is known as Embrace the Tree, and its benefits are legion.

According to Taoist master Mantak Chia, Embrace the Tree stimulates the lymph nodes in

the groin, armpits and back of knees. The deep abdominal breathing practiced while holding the posture also helps propel fluid through the lymphatic system. The lymphatic system removes wastes and toxins from all the body's cells and also contains antibodies. And holding the arms in an arc in front of the chest stimulates the thymus gland, which lies underneath the sternum, and provides T-cells, which kill cancer, viruses and other invaders.

Noted acupuncturist Yves Requena in his book *Chi Kung: The Art of Mastering Energy* relates that from an energy viewpoint, Embrace the Tree opens the twelve primary chi channels that lead to the organ systems. It also stretches and stimulates the "Great Loom," the network of major energy meridians that cross the back. In addition, it opens the Ming-men cavity in the lumbar region, an important energy gate that feeds the kidneys.

While Embracing the Tree, by breathing deeply from the abdomen, blood vessels relax, blood pressure and heart rate drops. Anxiety and stress lessen. The mind calms. The muscles of the legs grow strong. The arms become as wiry as gnarled hickory limbs.

When I first started to Embrace the Tree, I could only hold the posture for a few minutes. That's because I had a tumor in my right shoulder and I couldn't bear the pain. After a few rounds of chemotherapy in preparation for my transplant, the tumor shrank and I could begin dedicated training. In China, serious internal martial artists practice standing post meditation postures for over an hour. That became my goal—to hold Embrace the Tree for more than sixty minutes, despite the cancer damage in my shoulder and hips and bad football knees.

Three Months of Atomic Bomb Chemotherapy

The stem cell transplant I was scheduled for in 1995 at the University of Connecticut's Heath Center was far more intense than the one I endured at Beth Israel Hospital in Boston in 1993. This transplant procedure required three "mini-transplant" four-day hospital stays in successive months, in which high-dose chemotherapy would blast any cancer cells in the body and bring the immune system almost down to ground zero. Then growth hormone would help rebuild the immune system. Then as the immune system regenerated, stem cells would be harvested for the transplant procedure itself, in which "hydrogen bomb" chemotherapy would annihilate the immune system entirely and the stem cells would be replaced to recreate it.

After the first mini-transplant stay, doctors tried to harvest stem cells from me. But I couldn't mobilize any in appreciable amounts. That's because I'd had a previous transplant with the high-dose chemotherapy that had supposedly permanently suppressed my immune system. So the doctors took bone marrow out of my hips. Bone marrow is not as pure a product as stem cells; it includes many different types of cells and using it means a greater chance of your immune system not engrafting, or "taking", properly. It means a much longer hospital stay and less chance of survival.

At that point I made it my goal to trigger my immune system so it would mobilize stem cells for one of the later mini-transplant stays. I had two young sons and a wife I loved. I wanted to survive. I started Embracing the Tree twice a day. I built up slowly to twenty minutes, then thirty minutes.

At first when you Embrace the Tree, the pain in your arms is the overwhelming distraction. The weight of holding your arms in an arc two feet away from your chest puts an enormous

strain on your shoulders. Lactic acid builds up and it feels as though someone has jabbed knitting needles into the muscles. You want to quit after five minutes. But if you have a goal—survival—you don't quit. And if you use the feelings of quit as motivation—mentally I would chastise myself for wanting to quit—you can trick yourself into continuing.

And then something strange happens. After fifteen or twenty minutes the pain lessens. Dr. Yang explained to me that a dam of chi, or energy, releases. Then the posture becomes far more comfortable to hold. I also had to build up the strength in my legs, which had become de-conditioned from dealing with the pain in my hips from the cancer.

Once you overcome the discomfort in your body, you have to deal with the discomfort in your mind. After standing in place for twenty minutes, you can get bored. So you have to continuously focus on your breathing and ignore the thoughts of boredom and other distractions your mind puts before you. Another method is to visualize energy moving in various orbits within your body. In time, energy actually will flow there. It takes practice.

By the time of my second mini-transplant hospital stay I could Embrace the Tree for forty minutes. I had high hopes that my immune system would produce stem cells. But I was disappointed. My stem cell count barely registered.

I had one final shot—one final mini-transplant stay and one more chance to mobilize stem cells for the actual transplant. In my mind I had to break the sixty-minute barrier and Embrace the Tree for an hour. As soon as I recovered from the withering effects of the high-dose chemotherapy from the mini-transplant stay, I began training again.

By the time of my third mini-transplant stay, I was standing for over an hour regularly. When the doctor began the process of harvesting stem cells, I asked him the odds of my being able to mobilize them. "After a previous transplant, and after two previous attempts to mobilize, I'd say 20,000 to one."

I mobilized. I went in for my actual stem cell transplant the next month and got out in record time for someone going for a first transplant, never mind a second one. A year later the cancer returned, a tiny tumor in my spine—the last gasp of the disease. One round of chemotherapy destroyed it. I've been clear of cancer for nine years and practice chi kung every day. My immune system should be permanently suppressed from the high-dose chemotherapy but my counts are in the normal range. I don't even catch colds.



By [runestone0](#)

- Posted February 4, 2009 at 1:46 am
 - [Report post](#)
- Hi,

I was Stage Four, lymphoma cancer, when I was diagnosed in 1991. It took me three more tries, but I finally beat it five years later.

I teamed up with a tai chi master and learned qigong, Chinese for energy work. The Chinese have been using qigong for thousands of years. It's based on acupuncture theory-- that you have channels of energy in your body leading to your organ systems. Keep these channels open, you remain healthy. If they become blocked, you become ill. Qigong exercises open these blockages.

In the photo above, I'm doing standing post meditation, which is the most difficult form of qigong. You stand in that posture, called Embrace the Tree, for anywhere from twenty minutes to an hour.

If you like, I could send you an article or two about it.

Hang in there. The doctors told me I had six months to live in 1991. They were wrong.

Best regards,

Bob

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