

MARY L. JURISSON: My name is Mary Jurrison. I'm a consultant in the physical medicine and rehabilitation department here at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. My area of interest is arthritis and hand rehabilitation, and I teach Tai Chi in cardiac rehab and also work in our hand center.

Tai Chi is a Chinese internal martial art that has several components in the practice. One is meditation and breathing exercises, so-called Qigong exercises where you cultivate your energy. Second component of it is memorized sequence of slowly, mindfully performed movements that are a way of practicing self-defense movements, actually.

And finally, one brings this all together in the push hands practice, a sort of slow moving dance that you do with another person to practice the movements that you've learned in situations where you might have your balance being-- my colleague in cardiovascular rehabilitation, Dr. Carmen Terzic asked me to introduce that to the program there. They're interested because there are a number of studies that have suggested that practice of Tai Chi exercises can reduce blood pressure, reduce falls, reduce resting heart rate, and can allow a training effect in patients with congestive heart failure without raising their heart rate. And so there's a lot of very compelling and interesting preliminary evidence of its benefits in cardiovascular rehabilitation.

Our patients ask us what they can do to improve their health and Tai Chi is a very holistic approach to health and self-care that might be applicable in a number of areas. The meditative aspects can help with cultivating equanimity under stress and certainly being ill, the reason you go to the Mayo Clinic, can improve your ability to navigate the emotional challenges of being ill and trying to recover or adapting to living with a chronic disease. And the preliminary studies have suggested that it might be helpful in people with back pain, osteoarthritis.

It's been used in Parkinson's disease. It's been used in caregivers to help them achieve a sense of well-being when they have a loved one that they're caring for that's very ill, perhaps with cancer or otherwise. Osteoarthritis of the knee is supposed to benefit from Tai Chi practice.