

## Tai Chi for Health in Hawaii

Making older adults as well as their care-givers/families aware of the need for fall prevention and their potential risk for falls is a major concern. The "Boomer" generation is confirmed to be extremely independent, and in addition, maintains a high degree of "it could not happen to me" syndrome. Therefore any process or program that can expand not only their awareness but there desire to participate in their own well-being is a winner. What follows is an explanation of creating awareness and implementing Tai Chi for Health into our state fall prevention programs. TCH is a vital component.

In Hawaii, the uniqueness of the multi-cultural environment was particularly challenging. However, from the very beginning, a presentation about fall prevention followed immediately with a demonstration of Tai Chi for Health (TCH) has never failed to elicit a positive response.

We began in Honolulu in 2010 with a TCH demonstration at the Senior Fair and Good Life Expo coupled with a FALLS Prevention booth that distributed fall prevention materials and balance tested willing attendees. This combination of demonstrating one of the world's finest fall prevention interventions in combination with balance testing to demonstrate those at risk for falls was extremely successful at the outset and has continued to grow in subsequent years. The fair has an average attendance of 23,000 over the 3 days. So to draw attention to the tai chi and fall prevention booth we distributed 80,000 bag-stuffers through 40 participating partner stores/ pharmacies. The bag-stuffers offered a FREE screening and other goodies which resulted in good participation as we were competing for attention with over 180 other booths at the Fair.

In 2011 we conducted two pilot programs to demonstrate TCH's effectiveness. The first was at Pohai Nani, an independent multi-level care residence. The attendees were pre and post tested for balance and completed 12 weeks of twice-a-week tai chi participation. 80% of the attendees used a walker or mobility assistance devices. Their improvement was wonderful. The participants recorded only one fall in the 12 months after the program ended. This was followed with a second pilot at the Leahi State Hospital following the same process of 12 weeks twice a week participation. What makes Leahi unique is that 95% of these full-time resident participants were high care patients and confined to wheelchairs. They practiced the "sitting" version of TCH. That program continues today as a result of 3 training scholarships to nurse/staff who became certified TCHI instructors and continue to teach twice a week 52 weeks a year. The program is in its 3<sup>rd</sup> year and the fall reduction is spectacular.

In 2012 we began a series of 8 statewide presentations co-sponsored by AARP and the State Department of Health (DOH). Again we presented on fall prevention and directly and immediately followed with a tai chi demonstration indicating to the attendees that it was the Number 1 fall prevention intervention in the world. Of course CDC's compendium confirmed that tai chi is the most effective intervention in

improving balance and preventing falls. In post evaluation questionnaires the TCH/ Falls portion of the AARP program always scored #1 for value and enjoyment.

All of the above events have been featured in broadcast news stories and print coverage. We reference them continually in all PowerPoint presentations to senior groups and community events. In 2013 we completed the first ever Hawaii State Fall Prevention Plan. Tai Chi for Health and the need to continually train additional instructors is a component of that plan. In 2011, 2012, 2013 and now 2014, the State Department of Health will co-sponsor and fiscally support TCH workshops on Oahu and 3 neighbor islands to continue to expand this extremely beneficial intervention.