

Sunday, May 6, 2007

Study shows link to t'ai chi and warding off shingles.

Lao Tzu, the purported author of the Tao te ching. Taoism is closely connected with t'ai chi principles. (Image from the public domain). Several times I have spoken about the benefits of applying the lessons of t'ai chi to law practice and the rest of life. When I asked him for information about t'ai chi teachers a dozen years ago, late trial lawyer Victor Crawford sent me a note that amazing doors were about to be opened. Little did I realize that I would later learn of a recent study finding possible links between t'ai chi and reducing the risk of contracting shingles. The article is here. This study makes sense. Stress increases the risk of contracting shingles and many other ailments. When I got shingles sixteen years ago (fortunately mild and short-lived, after taking acyclovir for several days), I was experiencing tremendous stress and was still three years away from learning t'ai chi. Practicing t'ai chi regularly with the guidance of an excellent teacher is one of the best ways to reduce stress and to feel balance, harmony and control over oneself and one's surroundings. As my late teacher John Johnson reminded people: "The life of lawyering is filled with noise and turmoil. Peace is hard to find - even in seeking after justice. Modern mankind runs amok in anxious pursuit of an elusive technological happiness." T'ai chi helps balance the noise and turmoil for lawyers and everyone else. Jon Katz. **ADDENDUM:** After drafting this blog entry, the original link to the shingles article expired, and I found this link here. The original link did not refer to the type of t'ai chi involved in the study. The new link says t'ai chi chih was used, which is different from the t'ai chi chuan that I follow (more specifically, the t'ai chi chuan yang style short form developed by Cheng Man Ching, who condensed the t'ai chi form "into 37 postures, thereby making it both easier to teach, to learn, and to practice"). T'ai chi chih apparently shortens the t'ai chi form to twenty movements. T'ai chi chih is not a martial art, whereas my form of t'ai chi very much is a martial art, which is particularly essential for me, seeing that I apply it to my law practice. Seeing that this shingles study involves a t'ai chi form that seems very different from the form I practice, would that suggest that my form is any less effective in preventing shingles? I doubt it, considering the many mental and physical health benefits that I and many others have derived from t'ai chi chuan yang style short form. Moreover, it seems reliable that Cheng Man Ching studied t'ai chi because he had contracted tuberculosis, and that he overcame the tuberculosis after daily grueling practice, combined with training under the amazing Yang Cheng-fu.

Posted by Jon Katz in Jon's news & views at 00:20