

Reviewer's report

Title: In Vitro Test of External Qigong

Version: 1 **Date:** 8 December 2003

Reviewer: brian jones

Reviewer's report:

General

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

There are a number of problems with the experimental model:

1. It may not be physiologically "good" for human astrocytes to survive under limiting culture conditions. Cells should die when conditions are unfavourable. The astrocyte model should have been used with a range of feeder cell concentrations and expected survival outcomes. A malignant cell killing model might have been preferable.
2. The above may not be so important if the qigong practitioners were instructed specifically to provide growth enhancing and not growth inhibiting influences. Indeed the experiment might have been conducted in both directions.
3. On page 9 the authors describe the two treatment boxes as being "labelled A or B". Was the label visible? Didn't this unblind the experiment?
4. The authors should explain how experiment in which sham preceded qigong were kept blinded.
5. For studies in Beijing culture plates were carried back to San Francisco for counting. What was the effect on cell growth of high altitude, fluctuating temperature, pH changes, etc?
6. All data is expressed as ratios of qigong/sham and we are not told actual cell or colony yields, nor given actual variability between cultures or experiments. This should be provided as supplementary information.
7. Figure 1 needs to be improved so that data points do not overlap.

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

None