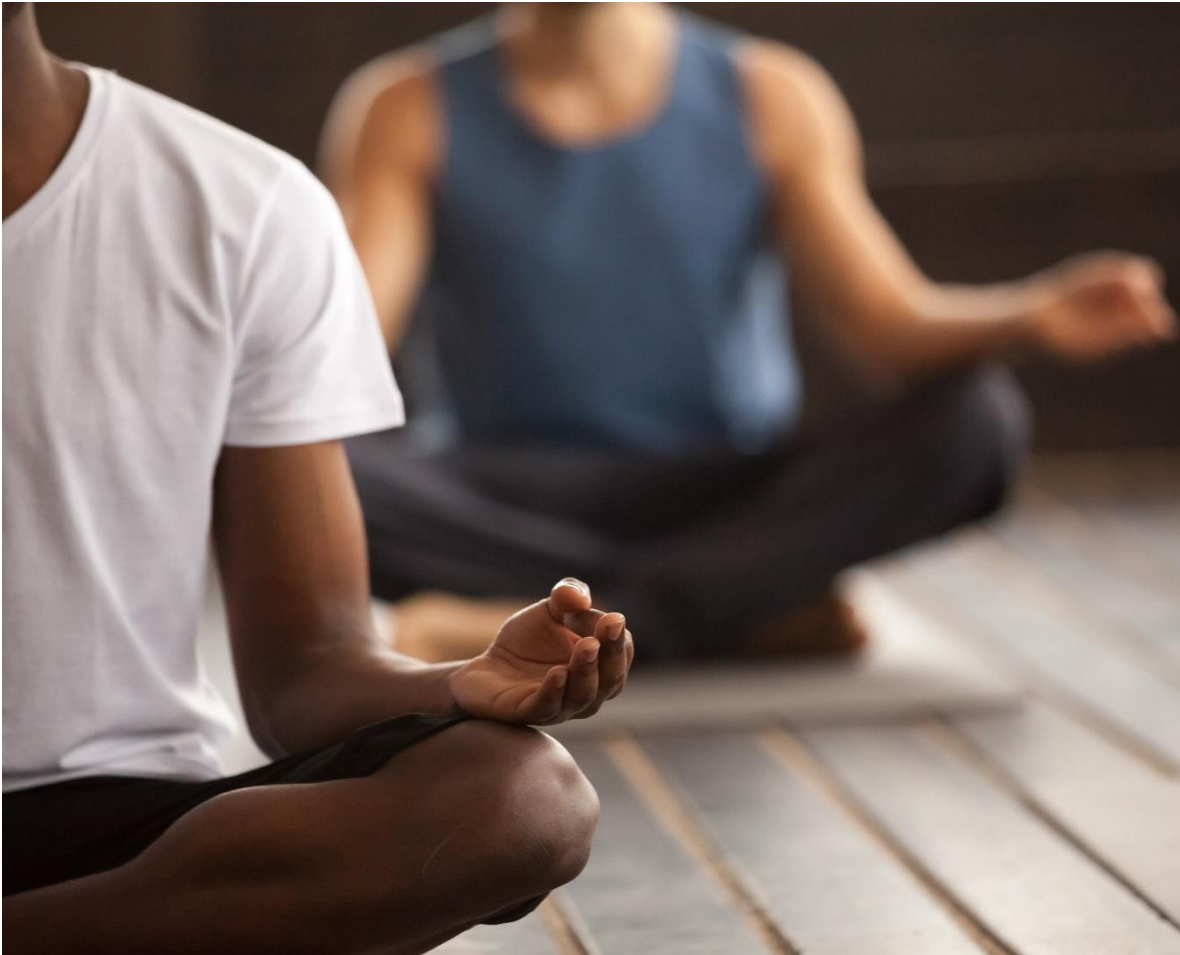


## **3rd International Yoga and Mind Body practice conference**

### **20<sup>th</sup> June 2025**

Gujrat Hindu Society, Preston, Lancashire, U.K.



***Consciousness UK***

***Social Prescribing Unit, University of Lancashire***

***Active Lancashire***

***Gujarat Hindu Society***

***Confucius Institute***

***Nottingham Trent University***

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## Foreword

“It is with great pleasure and a deep sense of purpose that we present to you to the 3rd International Conference on Yoga and Mind-Body Practice, held in partnership with the University of Lancashire and Active Lancashire. This year’s theme, “One World, One Health,” could not be more timely or more vital.

In a world increasingly shaped by global challenges—be it climate change, pandemics, mental health crises, or widening health inequalities—this conference stands as a beacon of unity, resilience, and holistic wellbeing. The theme reminds us that health is not confined to the individual, nor to one system or one nation. It is a shared responsibility, a collective aspiration, and a universal right.

Yoga and other mind-body practices offer more than physical benefits; they are powerful tools for cultivating mental clarity, emotional balance, and social connection. Rooted in ancient wisdom and supported by modern science, these practices bridge the gap between tradition and innovation, between personal wellbeing and planetary health. They remind us that healing begins within, but must extend outward—to our communities, our ecosystems, and our shared humanity.

This conference brings together a diverse and inspiring community of researchers, practitioners, educators, and advocates from across the globe. Together, we will explore how yoga and mind-body practices can contribute to integrated health systems, support mental health recovery, enhance resilience in the face of adversity, and promote equity in access to wellbeing.

We are especially proud to host this event in Lancashire. Through collaboration with academic institutions, public health leaders, community organisations, and local residents, we are building a model of health that is inclusive, sustainable, and rooted in lived experience.

As we gather to share knowledge, spark dialogue, and inspire action, let us hold fast to the spirit of One World, One Health. Let this conference be a catalyst for deeper connection, greater compassion, and bold, collective steps toward a healthier future for all.

Welcome—and thank you for being part of this important journey.”

Dr. Sakthi Karunanithi

(Director of Public Health, Wellbeing and Communities, Lancashire County Council)

### Keynote presentations

- [Dr. Ananda Kumar Dhanasekaran](#), NHS consultant
- [Dr. Sakthi Karunanithi](#), Consciousness UK
- [Mr. Khushal Kumar](#), National Forum of Health and Wellbeing
- [Dr Lorenzo More](#), University of Lancashire

### Workshops

- Glimmers: Qigong – Lisa Clughen, Nottingham Trent University
- Breathwork – Dr Sakthi Karunanithi, Consciousness UK
- Chinese Tea Ceremony: The Confucius Institute, University of Lancashire
- Movement Activity title: An Experiential Session of a Comparative Journey through Taichi, Qigong and Yoga: Honorary Lecturer Feixia Yu, Yu Taichi
- Moving with Nature: Qigong for Resilience and Healthy Ageing, Wuji Wellbeing: Nicola Barlow

### Poster presenters

- **Bailey et al.** University of Lancashire Social Prescribing Unit
  - Project Mandala: Evaluation of a National Lottery funded 18-week community yoga project.
- **Yu, F.** Honorary Principal Lecturer, University of Lancashire. Yu Taichi.
  - Plungington Community Centre and Taichi Qigong for Social Prescribing
  - Enhancing Wellbeing Through Online Baduanjin: Participant Feedback and Lessons from an 8-Week Open University Programme
  - From Museum to Social Prescribing: Qigong as Culturally Grounded Community Care
- **Boland et al.** *Research Facilitation and Delivery Unit, University of Lancashire.*
  - Connected Communities: Implementing community support services
- **Whall, R.** Senior Lecturer, University of Lancashire
  - Eco-ception: An intelligence perspective on the human-nature relationship

### Stalls

- National Forum of Health and Wellbeing, University of Lancashire: Social Prescribing Unit, Allied Health Research Unit & Confucius Institute, Active Lancashire, Community organisations, The Yogi Group, Wuji Wellbeing

## Qigong-based Mindful Movement ‘Glimmers’ for Staff and Students in Higher Education

*[Lisa Clughen](#)*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Nottingham Trent University, UK

### **Practical session**

This proposal stems on my research on mindful movement for staff and students in Higher Education. Such work led to the recent release in 2025 a course that offers mindful movement practices for educators and staff working in education. This was produced in collaboration with the international teaching development organisation, OneHE, and internationally esteemed somatic movement expert from the US, Dr Martha Eddy, called ‘[Move, Focus, Learn: Mindful Movement for Learning](#)’. I propose a 10-minute movement activity or, if organisers prefer, a series of 5-minute movement activities that offer movement opportunities to bring what US clinical Psychologist, Deb Dana, calls ‘[Glimmers](#)’ into our working days. Dana defines Glimmers as ‘micro-moments of regulation that foster feelings of well-being’ and which therefore constitute simple responses to stress management for HE staff and students and indeed for anybody who needs stress release. I will briefly introduce Dana’s concept of ‘Glimmers’ and participants will be invited to experience movement ‘Glimmers’ adapted from the Chinese practice of Tai-Chi Qigong Shibashi. The movements will promote Glimmers of sociality, openness to experience, and even joy and positive affect. Delegates will also be invited to trial what I call my ‘Monday morning move’ to stimulate focus, purpose and motivation.

The overarching objective is to experience how body-mind movement practices can offer a wonderful form of support for anybody, staff and students, involved in higher education.

**References:** Dana, Deb (2024) What is a Glimmer? [[Available Online](#)].

## Plungington Community Centre and Taichi Qigong for Social Prescribing

*Ben Clayton<sup>1</sup>, Feixia Yu<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>Plungington Community Centre, Preston, UK

<sup>2</sup>YuTaichi & Qigong Ltd, Preston, UK

### Oral presentation

#### Introduction

Plungington Community Centre is a successful hub for social prescribing, situated in an area of high social needs and in a neighbourhood scoring in the bottom 10% for deprivation. It is just outside the university quarter and serves as a focal point for service providers, users, and social prescribing link workers.

#### Method

To meet the diverse need of its users from very mixed cultural backgrounds, the Centre offers a range of social, educational, cultural, and physical activities aimed at building community resilience. Activities include chair yoga, meditation, indoor bowling, faith group gatherings, food bank, Dance Syndrome, Eat-and-Meet, and a vibrant café. In partnership with Feixia Yu, Taichi Qigong sessions were introduced twice a week, attracting referrals from social prescribers, centre workers, and community members. Continuous candid feedback from participants, many of whom have attended for years and built up the trust with our staff, ensures a user-centred approach in our work.

#### Result

The programme has improved participants' physical health, flexibility, and movement. More importantly, it has enhanced their sense of resilience and social connection. Engagement in these activities opens up further opportunities, enriching their experience. This presentation will highlight user feedback, emphasizing the role of the community centre in supporting wellbeing and fostering neighbourhood cohesion.

#### Conclusion

The Taichi Qigong sessions, alongside other activities, contribute significantly to participants' mental and physical wellbeing. It is exactly this process that we see as critical to the development of a community and building on solid foundations so closely linked to health and wellbeing. This holistic approach supports both the aging well agenda and a community's foundation in health and wellbeing. Ultimately, this pathway illustrates how social prescribing and community engagement can heal and empower individuals and strengthen community bonds.

## Connected Communities: Implementing community support services

Paul Boland<sup>1</sup>, Jo C Weldon<sup>1</sup>, Kathryn Berzins<sup>1</sup>, Joseph Spencer<sup>2</sup> Danielle Christian<sup>1</sup>, Dawn Allen<sup>3</sup>, Neil Joseph<sup>3</sup>, Mark Gabbay<sup>4</sup>, Caroline Watkins<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> University of Lancashire, Preston, United Kingdom

<sup>2</sup> University of Sheffield, Sheffield, United Kingdom

<sup>3</sup> NIHR ARC NWC Public Adviser, Liverpool, United Kingdom

<sup>4</sup> University of Liverpool, Liverpool, United Kingdom

### [Poster presentation]

### Introduction

Community support services signpost people to local social, emotional, and practical support (e.g. social prescribing, neighbourhood coaches). These services involve someone talking with service users before direction towards relevant activities (e.g. yoga), but little is understood about how they are implemented and sustained.

### Methods

We interviewed people using/working with three community support services, and thematically analysed coded data using an implementation framework. Key themes were co-developed into illustrations by two Public Advisers from analyses.

### Results

We interviewed 12 service users, 16 service providers and 8 linked providers, from three different intensity services in the North-West (low-intensity: Community Connectors; medium-intensity: The Life Rooms; high-intensity: Social Prescribers), between February-September 2023. Across services, we identified five themes around how services address implementation barriers and facilitators:

1. Flexibility of services. Sometimes services adapt to keep going, e.g. service user support duration, funding restrictions, global health challenges (COVID-19).
2. Collaborative delivery. Working together helps providers support users better, using community spaces and addressing service gaps.
3. Practicalities of accessing services. Services support a wide age-range of socially isolated people with complex challenges in moving forward with their lives.
4. Service resource availability. Providers find ways to work with limited resources, e.g. time, funding, staffing, and technology.
5. Understanding how services make a difference. People recognise service relevance through feedback, but struggle demonstrating long-term impacts on users.

### Conclusion

Community support services are valued by staff and users, but face challenges from uncertain funding and increasing need. Findings will be shared in an implementation toolkit, academic publication and accessible report.

## **An Experiential Session of a Comparative Journey through Taichi, Qigong and Yoga**

*Feixia Yu*<sup>1,2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> University of Lancashire, Preston, United Kingdom

<sup>2</sup> YuTaichi & Qigong Ltd, Preston, UK

### **Practical Workshop**

#### **A short biography**

Feixia Yu is an Honorary Principal Lecturer at the University of Lancashire. She is an experienced Taichi, Qigong and Yoga instructor qualified in China, India and England. Her research area is in the integration of Medical Qigong in social prescribing. In addition to online classes, she teaches at Manchester Museum.

The session intends to illustrate the similarity and uniqueness in techniques, breathing, intention and visualization in these three disciplines. You are invited to explore three seated practices, namely, Taichi Straight-leg Sitting Waist Relaxation Method, Qigong Seated Hands to Feet Pose for the Frost Descend Season, and Yoga Paschimottanasana Seated Forward Bend – to discover their unique approaches to spinal (and overall) health, breath, energy pathways, as well as the corresponding theories of Qi, Meridians and Chakras.



## Enhancing Wellbeing Through Online Baduanjin: Participant Feedback and Lessons from an 8-Week Open University Programme

*Feixia Yu<sup>1</sup>, Dr Qian Kan<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Honorary Lecturer, University of Lancashire, Preston, United Kingdom

<sup>2</sup> Open University, Milton Keynes, United Kingdom

### Oral presentation

#### Introduction

Baduanjin, a traditional Chinese Qigong practice, is increasingly recognized for its physical and mental health benefits. Stress, sedentary lifestyles and the need for accessible intervention from the student and staff community prompted the Online Confucius Institute at the Open University to offer an 8-week online Qigong course. Baduanjin is chosen as a routine for its simplicity and effectiveness and as a vehicle to bridge the cultural and practical wellbeing needs. The 30-minute class is scheduled at lunchtime to make it accessible to more people. This study evaluates participant feedback at the end of the course.

#### Methods

A post-course survey (N=33) assessed satisfaction, perceived effectiveness, physical/mental benefits, and future interests. Likert-scale and open-ended questions are asked to measure satisfaction, effectiveness and benefits. The survey is totally anonymous and participation is fully voluntary.

#### Results

91% reported very/somewhat satisfied, 73% found it “very effective”. In the areas of physical and mental benefits, Relaxation (64%), balance (58%), flexibility (55%) are the top outcomes identified. In terms of cultural interest, 94% wanted to learn about traditional Chinese health theory. As for the programmes sustainability, 79% committed to regular practice, with strong interest in learning new routines.

#### Conclusion

Baduanjin is a scalable, engaging tool for wellbeing, with potential to bridge physical practice and cultural learning as participants indicate interest in TCM theory. Online Baduanjin is a feasible, well-received intervention for wellbeing, with potential for expansion into cultural education and complementary practices, including Taichi and Shaolin Qigong. It is also adaptable for time-constrained audiences, showing a potential for larger scale workplace wellbeing programmes.

# From Museum to Social Prescribing: Qigong as Culturally-Grounded Community Care

[Che McGarvey-Gill<sup>1</sup>](#), [Samantha Pywell<sup>1</sup>](#), [Feixia Yu<sup>1</sup>](#)

<sup>1</sup> University of Lancashire, Preston, United Kingdom

## Oral presentation

### Introduction

The research involves a collaboration of academia, a small private company and a large cultural institution on a two-year aging well project at the Chinese cultural Gallery at the Manchester Museum. It aims to investigate the holistic benefits including pain management, mobility, fall prevention and combating loneliness. It is noticed that most UK social prescribing movements are western (e.g. gardening, walking groups etc.), while Taichi and Qigong add diversity. The project will also highlight the cost-effectiveness of such wellbeing projects in cultural setting to NHS social prescribing leads and hopefully encourage more local museums and galleries in the region to use their cultural spaces as health hubs.

### Methods

An ethics application has been submitted to the university. This project uses the quantitative method of in-depth interviews with around 8-10 participants and stakeholders. It uses thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke) to identify patterns (e.g. Qigong as a social lifeline or Qigong for balance and flexibility improvement). Consideration is also given to a collection of 60 informal feedback collected over the past two years, which are written on museum feedback cards. This offers a wider range of views from the much bigger groups of participants.

### Results

Data collection is to start upon ethics approval.

### Conclusion

This qualitative study explores how long-term Qigong practice in a museum setting addresses aging-related challenges among UK older adults. We aim to analyse the in-depth interviews and hope to answer the question if the project demonstrates measurable improvements in physical mobility, social connectedness and cultural engagement. If so, it will help to position Taichi and Qigong practices as viable social prescriptions.

## **Project Mandala: Evaluation of a National Lottery funded 18-week community yoga project.**

Megan Bailey<sup>1</sup>, Emma Lowther-Wright<sup>2</sup>, Vansh Patel<sup>1</sup>, Sitara Lewis<sup>1</sup> Samantha Pywell<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> University of Lancashire, Preston, Lancashire, United Kingdom

<sup>2</sup> The Mandala CIC, Preston, Lancashire, United Kingdom

### **Poster**

The experience of stress is extremely high due to a variety of factors that occur in daily life. The stress response is an emotional state that consists of persistent worry and mental tension (anxiety) which can often be shown through physical symptoms e.g., frequent headaches/fatigue. Approximately 9 in 10 (91%) adults within the UK have experienced pressure-related stress throughout 2024 with the most common cause of stress being related to work and financial uncertainty. In order to reduce such stressors, yoga is a recommended activity. Regular yoga practice promotes relaxation and allows an individual to become aware and acknowledge their stress and release it in an unharmed manner; Yoga will have a positive impact on the activity of the amygdala which allows for more regulated emotional processing. The Mandala Community Interest Company (CIC) is a yoga and well-being community organisation that has been successfully supporting their clients with physical and mental health needs. Following, successful National Lottery funding to deliver free sessions to the community, the social prescribing unit at the University of Lancashire was involved in evaluating this yoga programme from the perspective of the client. This study aims to evaluate the efficacy of the mandala's 18-week yoga programme through utilising client experiences. Participants completed the stress measurement scale questionnaire for both pre-and-post-class attendance, enabling the researchers to capture yoga's true effectiveness in real-time. This poster presentation will illustrate the initial research findings and include recommendations for future yoga on social prescription delivered by community-based organisations.

Ethics: HEALTH 01200, University of Lancashire.

## Eco-ception: An intelligence perspective on the human-nature relationship

*Richard Whall*

<sup>1</sup>Senior lecturer, UCLan, Preston, United Kingdom

### **Practical/talk**

Found in published literature in a variety of contexts dating back over 250 years, the term physical intelligence can be considered as the ability to relate to ourselves and our environment through meaningful movement and provides a useful framework to help make the most of our embodied capacities and the ways in which we can interact with the world.

Based on the principles of biotensegrity (the self-organising balance of tension and compression within a living organism), an individual's physical intelligence is shaped by the dynamic interplay between awareness, experience and environment as ways of knowing (the compression struts), and senses, thoughts and actions as ways of communicating (the tensional bands).

Within this framework, awareness encompasses the totality of our conscious and unconscious perception and action both of and in our external environment and also within ourselves, our internal environment, through interoceptive processes. Furthermore, a new form of perception can be conceived: eco-ception - which considers our awareness and the way we relate to and think about ourselves, as complex living ecosystems embedded within wider, dynamic ecosystems.

Eco-ception, therefore, helps us to shift away from the machine-like view of life, instead capturing a holistic, dynamic, and relational way of perceiving both the self and the world—rooted in biology, philosophy, and ecology. This poster aims to introduce and expand on the concept of eco-ception, and how it relates to physical intelligence, and acts as an open invitation to discuss its relevance and application, particularly within mind-body practices.

## Moving with Nature: Qigong for Resilience and Healthy Ageing

*Nicola Barlow*

Wuji Wellbeing, Ormskirk, Lancashire, United Kingdom

### **Practical**

I am a physiotherapist specialising in chronic pain, with 12 years of experience helping people move more freely and take an active role in managing their condition. Alongside my clinical work, I have a deep interest in holistic approaches to health and wellbeing.

Inspired by nature, I teach Qigong outdoors — combining gentle, flowing movement with mindful awareness of the five senses. My training includes studies with Sue Weston, Holden Qigong, and Nick Loffree.

As we age, chronic stress and physical tension can affect both body and mind. The limitations of the Western “fix-it” model highlight the need to reconnect with our inner and outer environments to support lifelong vitality.

Gentle movement and time in nature build body awareness, ease tension, and restore balance. Research shows this can lower cortisol, enhance mood, and boost immunity.

Qigong nurtures adaptability, calm, and connection — fostering resilience and wellbeing for healthy ageing in a changing world.



Many thanks to our sponsors who have supported and enabled the vision of making this conference free to all.

**Consciousness UK**

**Active Lancashire**

**The Confucius Institute, University of Lancashire**

**Nottingham Trent University**

**Gujarat Hindu Society**

**Social Prescribing Unit, University of Lancashire**



## **The conference team**

Many thanks to our conference team:

**Dr. Sakthi Karunanithi**, Director of Public Health, Lancashire, England, UK.

**Sam Pywell**, Principal Lecturer, Social Prescribing Unit, University of Lancashire, UK.

**Lisa Clughen**, Nottingham Trent University, UK.

**Dr. Ambreen Chohan**, Senior Research Fellow, Allied Health Research Unit, University of Lancashire, UK.

**Mel Lowe**, Apprenticeship Work Based Learning educator, University of Lancashire, UK.

**Sarah Cotton**, ODP Apprenticeship Work Based Learning Educator, University of Lancashire, UK.

**Che McGarvey-Gill**, Senior Lecturer, Social Work, University of Lancashire, UK.

## Conference aims



Adapted from “The 5 ways to wellbeing” (New Economics Foundation, 2008)

Theme					
<b>Connect</b> With other delegates In group sessions Before, during and after conference	<b>Be active</b> Do Yoga & mind-body practice Nature emersion & practice	<b>Keep learning</b> Learn more theory, practice, research and the evidence base Innovate for future health creation	<b>Take notice</b> Meditation Mindfulness Focus on the present	<b>Give</b> Yogic responsibilities - community ethos Free sessions Break/remove barriers to yoga and mind-body practice individuals face	<b>Meditate</b> For health creation



Since the 2025 conference, we have been working together on the vision of creating free tickets to all delegates. This was based on feedback in previous conferences, and the 5<sup>th</sup> way to wellbeing observed as “to give” (NEF, 2008) intersecting many yogic and mind body practitioner responsibilities. Knowledge exchange on yoga and mind body practice is important given the rises in health inequalities, cost of living and the potential for these practices to positively impact peoples’ lives. This year we achieved this goal thanks to our sponsors. We are searching for collaborators to support this vision for next year – 2026 will be the 4<sup>th</sup> year our conference has run with increasing partners, delegates, audience, connections and collaborators. Without you, we could not make this happen so I would like to take this opportunity to personally thank all of you for your contributions. We can achieve much more together and would like to pursue the vision of breaking down and ultimately removing the barriers to yoga and mind body practices which are beneficial supported with the growing evidence base. Thank you all. Om shanti, shanti, shanti.

Sam Pywell, Principal Lecturer.

Social Prescribing Lead, University of Lancashire

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