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### ***Seabury Teams Up With UConn For Tai Chi Study*** Health Benefit For Older Adults Researched

BLOOMFIELD – February 28, 2017 – Seabury Active Life Plan Community in Bloomfield has recently found a partner in fitness for its residents -- a team of researchers from UConn.

The group includes Distinguished Professor, Linda Pescatello, Ph.D.; Graduate Research Assistant and Project Coordinator, Yin Wu, M.A., from the UConn Department of Kinesiology; and co-investigators Professor, Minh-Hui Chen, Ph.D., UConn, Department of Statistics; Professor Crystal Park, Ph.D.; UConn, Department of Psychological Sciences; Assistant Professor in Residence Susan Glenney, D.P.T., UConn Department of Kinesiology; Associate Professor Beth Taylor, Ph.D., UConn, Department of Kinesiology; and Professor of Medicine Richard Fortinsky, Ph.D., UConn Health, Center on Aging.

In their partnership with Seabury, these scholars are doing more than just fitness; they have taken on the challenge of discovering what the practice of Tai Chi can do for the health of older adults.

“Tai Chi is safe, enjoyable, social, and is wonderful exercise for older adults,” explains Dr. Linda Pescatello. Although some residents may already be aware of the benefits of Tai Chi for senior health, this study seeks to address a different issue. “The entire movement in our field and all health-related fields is precision medicine... you tailor the therapeutic intervention for a person, verses a generic approach for all people, to make medications, diets, and/or exercise more effective,” Dr. Pescatello notes.

Currently, Tai Chi is not designed to target a specific health outcome, though it is widely offered to older adults to improve their health. This study, spearheaded by Kinesiology doctoral student, Yin Wu, is being conducted to determine if two different types of Tai Chi affect different health outcomes. Wu is doing the project for his dissertation and says that he started to be interested in physical activity and older adults during the two years of doing his Master’s research.

Once in the doctoral program at UConn and in Dr. Pescatello’s class, he wrote a systematic review looking at Tai Chi interventions improving balance in older adults. In this process, Wu says that “We developed a scale to evaluate whether investigators tailored their Tai Chi intervention for the health

outcome they were hoping to improve. We found out no, no one is doing that. So that's how we came up with the idea of doing this study where we compare two different Tai Chi practices that have been designed for different purposes."

Wu explains that Tai Chi is a neuro-motor exercise and incorporates balance, some aerobic, and some strength/resistance elements. The style used at Seabury is Yang style, because the movement is smooth and slow, and the stance is higher compared to other styles, making it more amenable to an older population. Within the study, the researchers have used different forms and different routines from Yang style to create differences between the groups. Keeping with the notion of trying to tailor medical interventions for specific individuals, Wu underscored that they are not trying to determine what style is better, but what study is better for what.

In what has been an exciting and enriching study taking place right on their campus, Seabury residents have been willing participants. To participate in the study, residents must be able to walk on their own for safety, and must be in Independent Living, Seabury At Home (an at-home life plan program) or assisted living. Seabury independent living resident Ann Winship commented on the program saying, "I'm thrilled to be accepted as part of the program, and I feel Seabury is fortunate to be chosen for this study... it's well organized, and the instructor has years of experience."

Ken Zaborowski, of White Lotus Taijiquan of Central Connecticut, is the Tai Chi instructor for the group.

The relationship between Seabury and the UConn researchers has been nothing but positive. "They have embraced us with open arms and [are] taking it on as their study too," Dr. Pescatello explains. Up to this point, a long term study like this 12-week research at Seabury has not been done before. Once the data is collected, results could help to determine how to "prescribe" Tai Chi for specific health outcomes. The team will return after the 12 weeks and continue to offer Tai Chi classes once the study is completed. The team is collaborating with Seabury staff including Director of Fitness and Wellness, Cindy Senk M.Ed.; Assistant Director of Fitness, Matt McGowan, B.S.; Director of Rehabilitation, Sylvia DiBiasi, M.S.P.T.; Fitness and Wellness Coordinator, Kirsten Benson, B.S.; and Director of Senior Health, Dr. Patrick P. Coll, M.D.

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*Seabury is a not-for-profit interfaith Active Life Plan Community, sponsored by Church Home of Hartford, Inc., an affiliate of the Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut, providing housing since 1876. A Life Plan Community that opened in 1992, Seabury resides on 66 scenic acres in Bloomfield.*