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Wentworth-Douglass
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THE SEACOAST'S LEADING MEDICAL CENTER

INTEGRATIVE THERAPIES

THE BRIDGE

Evidence-Based Integration of Medicine and Healing

Wentworth-Douglass Hospital's

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Reiki

Energy medicine is a domain that deals with energy fields of two types: measurable fields, which include the use of measurable, specific frequencies or wavelengths to treat patients (including visible light, monochromatic lasers, magnetism, sound and rays from other parts of the electromagnetic spectrum), and yet to be measured subtle biofields. Studies of mechanisms and clinical effects of an energy field are quite obviously easier when the delivery of easily quantified amounts of energy is possible. Examples of well studied energy fields include lasers in surgery, light treatments in dermatology and for SAD in psychiatry, radiation therapy, and electromagnetic fields in magnetic resonance imaging and cardiac pacemakers. Historically, research in newly discovered energy fields is first met with skepticism, both in basic science and medical research. However, repeated, well designed studies often demonstrate efficacy that moves the treatment modality from the realm of alternative to traditional medicine. (Vallbona)

History

Reiki (ray´ kee), a gentle hands-on healing modality, was developed in Japan by Mikao Usui (1865-1926), a devoted spiritual aspirant, lifelong practitioner, and teacher of Tendai Buddhism. In 1937, Reiki spread from Japan to Hawaii and then to the U.S. mainland and around the world. *Rei* means universal or highest and *Ki* (like the Chinese *chi*) means subtle energy. Literally translated, the term

Reiki means “universal life energy.” As such, Reiki is classified by the National Institute of Health’s NCCAM (National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine) as a type of “Energy Medicine” based on human biofield energy. Reiki, QiGong, Therapeutic Touch, as well as acupuncture and acupressure, Ayurvedic medicine, herbal medicine, and traditional Chinese medicine all focus on a balance of this subtle “life force” or biofield energy. (Hinz) In a 2002 NIH statistics survey, Reiki had been utilized by 1% of participating Americans. (Barnes)

Science Research: the Biofield

Biofield medical research is hampered by difficulties in direct measurement of its subtle energies, although much basic science research is underway. Kirlian photography and gas discharge visualization have demonstrated changes before and after energy treatments. (Oschman) Demonstrations of one person’s energy field overlapping and interacting with that of another’s has been shown on EEG and EKG studies. For instance, when two people touch, one person’s EKG signal is demonstrated in the second’s EEG. This can be noted even with two people sitting quietly opposite one another. (Russek) Simple magnetometry has measured energy emissions 1000 times greater than the strongest human biomagnetic field

from the hands of various energy medicine practitioners. These are in the same range as those used in medical research labs for the speeding of certain biologic tissues: low and extremely low frequency (ELF) signals of 2-50 Hz. (Sisken) Interestingly, most of the activity is in the 7-8 Hz (ELF) range.

This curiously coincides with decades of EEG research data demonstrating “nearly identical EEG signatures” of 7.8 – 8 Hz during the “healing moments” of expert meditators and healers of all cultures and religious backgrounds. (Beck, Beauregard) This suggests that 7-8 Hz is a healing frequency that experienced practitioners can unconsciously or purposefully induce in their bodies. An extremely sensitive magnetometer (the SQUID) has measured large frequency-pulsing biomagnetic fields emanating from the hands of Therapeutic Touch practitioners during therapy. (Zimmerman) Infra-red light has been quantifiably emitted from the hands of QiGong practitioners. (Walker) Replicated studies demonstrate statistically significant decreases in gamma rays emitted from patients during energy healing sessions with trained practitioners. It has been hypothesized that the body’s primary gamma emitter, potassium-40, represents a “self regulation” of energy in the body and its surrounding electromagnetic field. (Benford)

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Physics

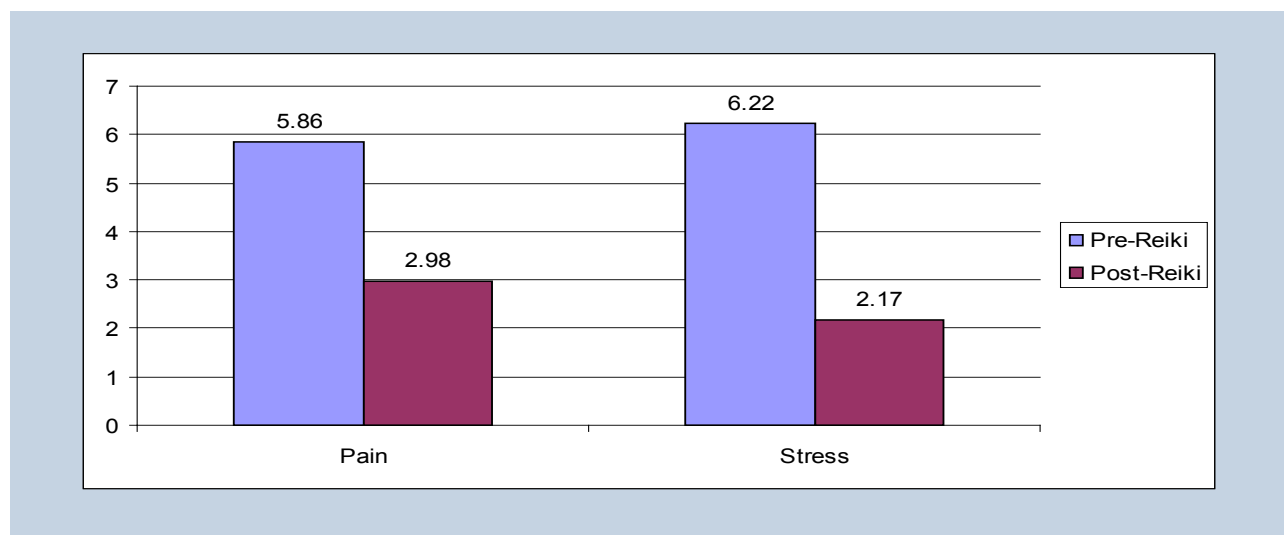
Lastly, recent physics research suggests an approach for describing the biopositive and parapsychological phenomena related to bioenergy healing and conscious intention. This research has postulated and tested the existence of “torsion fields.” Torsion fields are thought to propagate through space at greater than 10^9 times the speed of light in a vacuum, convey information without transmitting energy, and are not required to obey the superposition principle. (Panov) Russian scientist Akimov and his team consider the quantum vacuum as a universal torsion wave-carrying medium. The torsion field is said to fill all of space, including matter, isotropically. It has a quantal structure that is unobservable in non-disturbed states. However, violations of vacuum symmetry and invariance create different states. (Akimov) These theorized “violations” and “invariances” may be what the energy practitioners are creating, which induces changes in the gamma radiation previously described. In theory, bioenergy healers could be “Spin Doctors.” (Benford)

Clinical Studies

In clinical studies, Reiki is often grouped with Therapeutic Touch, a similar therapy, taught in many nursing schools as low risk “healing touch” therapies. Healing touch has been effective in reducing pain, mood disturbance, and fatigue in patients receiving cancer chemotherapy (Post-White, Tsang), has been deemed effective in reducing anxiety, stress, and pain, and in promoting relaxation, muscle relaxation, and wound healing. (Engbretson) Another study showed a highly significant reduction of pain of various causes including cancer following Reiki treatment. (Olson). A phase II trial of Reiki for pain control in advanced cancer patients showed improved pain control and overall quality of life, but did not reduce opioid use. (Olson) Reiki significantly reduced psychological distress, both immediately after a six week trial of one hour per week, and at one year when compared to sham Reiki. (Shore) Reiki shows promise for improving certain behavior and memory problems in mild cognitive impairments and mild Alzheimer’s disease. (Crawford) A preliminary study of the effects of Reiki on the autonomic nervous system showed that heart rate and diastolic blood pressure decreased significantly in the Reiki group compared to both sham Reiki and control groups. (Mackay).

WDH Clinical Data

Reiki services have grown from a modest 186 treatments in 2000 to a whopping 2443 treatments in 2007. Data taken on the 4,086 patient treatments provided at WDH shows that 22% stated they had pain and/or stress, and pre-treatment pain and/or stress scores were obtained. Results demonstrate a 49% reduction in pain and a 65% reduction in stress scores after Reiki treatment.



Our study sample size is significant, and the results support that Reiki offers our patients an opportunity to diminish pain and stress without the side effects of pharmaceuticals. There were no adverse effects from Reiki documented in our patient population and numerous patients have cited Reiki as a positive experience during their hospital stays. The WDH Reiki experience generally supports the findings of the clinical studies cited above.

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Reiki at Wentworth-Douglass Hospital

Reiki is offered by the Integrative Therapies Department at Wentworth Douglass Hospital through trained clinical staff and trained and experienced volunteers. Reiki has been offered in special sessions to administrative and provider staff so that those unfamiliar with Reiki could experience it themselves. In addition, staff interested in learning Reiki are offered training as Reiki practitioners.

Reiki at WDH is initiated by patient, nursing, or physician request and is available on all clinical units. It is requested for pain, stress, insomnia, end of life care, or by recommendation of family, friends or staff/physician. A number of cancer center patients receive regular Reiki treatments during their course of chemo/radiation for supportive/health care. In addition, patients undergoing elective surgical procedures are offered Reiki perioperatively as part of the WDH Integrative *Sail through Surgery* program.

Academic Centers Utilizing Reiki

Massachusetts General Hospital
Yale - New Haven Hospital
Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center
Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center
Memorial Sloan Kettering Hospital
Good Samaritan Hospital
Tucson Medical Center
George Washington University Hospital
Cleveland Clinic
University of Michigan Health System
Albert Einstein Healthcare Network
California Pacific Medical Center

Recommended Reading

Energy Medicine: The Scientific Basis of Bioenergy Therapies
James Oschman PhD (2000)

Reinventing Medicine: Beyond Mind-Body to a New Era of Healing
Larry Dossey MD (1999)

Entangled Minds
Dean Radin PhD (2006)

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Our Vision: Excellence in quality integrative health care, engaging all human capacity for healing and health.