

Research studies Reiki's effect on those living with cancer

Canadian research currently underway might show that Reiki treatments applied in conjunction with standard medical care improve the effectiveness of medication, decrease pain and lower the dosages of medicine needed by those who have cancer.

Reiki is a hands-on energy therapy that aims to increase and balance energy in all areas: physical, emotional, spiritual and mental.

The study is being done at the Cross Cancer Institute in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Completion is expected by fall 1999, according to Karin Olson, R.N., Ph.D., coordinator of nursing research at the institute. One hundred people are participating in the study, 50 receiving standard treatment for cancer, and 50 receiving the standard treatment for cancer with the addition of Reiki sessions.

Reiki sessions are administered every three days over a one-week period, and each treatment is about 75 minutes long, Olson said. Participants first lie supine while practitioners place their hands on 10 distinct locations on the head and torso, followed by eight more hand placements on the back, hip and feet areas while patients lie prone.

The amount of medication the person takes is monitored, and during the week patients are asked to record on a scale of 0-10 their level of pain at breakfast, lunch, dinner and bedtime. Those participating in the study must not be receiving chemotherapy or radiation therapy, must have normal cognitive function and be over age 18, Olson said.

A pilot study conducted in the second half of 1994 demonstrated that Reiki sessions were helpful in managing pain in general, Olson said, which was a prelimi-

nary step in estimating the benefit for individuals experiencing pain associated with cancer. Twenty community members volunteered for the pilot study; each had asked their physician for help with their pain.

"The use of nonpharmacologic interventions, such as Reiki, may make it possible to provide cancer patients with good pain control at lower doses of traditional opioid preparations, thus reducing these symptoms," Olson concluded in published results of the pilot study.

The institute obtained funding for its current clinical trial from the Alternative Cancer Research Foundation in Calgary. The foundation is a charitable organization established in Calgary to promote scientifically designed clinical trials on alternative cancer therapies and basic research on the causes of cancer. —Melissa B. Mower

Doctors speak out on complementary health care

When asked about their acceptance of complementary health care practices, one of eight doctors interviewed called them "enduring strategies" and criticized research efforts "saying that they often don't follow strict scientific protocol. Another doctor voiced her frustration with patients who try health care products based on the advice of strangers in health food stores. Another doctor blamed the distrust that physicians have of complementary health care on the very limited education offered at medical school. That doctor also said his colleagues don't often read journals that publish results of scientific studies on complementary health practices, so they don't know results are available.

Summary from *Doctors: The Back* by Louise Kasdon Smith in *Health* magazine, physicians' concerns about their patients and complementary health care. *Natural Health* magazine, July/August 1998.

TIME magazine features massage research

A full-page story with two photographs in the July 27 *TIME* magazine showcased studies that demonstrate the benefits and cost savings that result when preterm babies are massaged.

Following a description of the delicate features of a 9-day-old prematurely-born girl and her positive reaction to massage, writer Tammerlin Drummond wrote: "Infant massage? It sounds more like a New Age ritual than an internationally recognized alternative therapy. But studies at the Touch Research Institute have found that preemies massaged three times a day for as few as five days consistently fare better than equally frail babies who don't get massages."

Drummond also wrote that parents who massage their babies report that the babies sleep better, that colic is relieved and that massage helps hyperactive children relax.

A history of the formation of the Miami-based Touch Research Institute was provided by Tiffany Field, Ph.D., director and founder of the institute, who also pointed out that \$10,000 could be trimmed from each hospital stay if the 400,000 babies born prematurely in the United States were massaged. Even armed with this information, there's little incentive for hospitals to implement baby massage programs, as administrators are skeptical about its therapeutic value and HMOs don't cover it, the article stated.