

## Reiki

A MASSACHUSETTS HOSPITAL USES THIS FORM OF ENERGY HEALING ON PATIENTS TO RELIEVE PAIN AND SPEED RECOVERY. BY CLARE HORN



### Hands On, Hands Off

**Healing** Reiki practitioners usually touch patients when performing Reiki on them. However, treatments can also be performed across long distances through visualization.

**WHAT IT IS** Reiki is a Japanese system of energy healing. It is based on the idea that pain and disease are caused by an imbalance and shortages of life energy, called ki in Japanese (and qi in Chinese), in the body. Reiki practitioners balance a patient's ki by channeling additional energy from the universe into the patient's body. They accomplish this through touch, or by placing their hands just above the recipient's body. It is thought that ki enters practitioners through the crown of their heads and funnels down their arms and out their hands. It then enters the patient through seven different energy receptors called chakras (located at the crown, forehead, throat, heart, stomach, abdomen, and groin).

**HEALING CLAIMS** Reiki is said to help treat any type of ailment—physical, mental, or emotional. It is used most often to relieve both acute and chronic pain. It is also thought to help heal injuries, such as broken bones and burns, and diseases, such as asthma and cancer.

**HOW IT WORKS** No one knows exactly how Reiki works physiologically. One theory, explains Tanmaya Honervogt, Reiki master and author of *The Power of Reiki* (Owl Books, 1998), maintains that the seven chakras correspond to particular organs and endocrine glands. Channeling ki into these organs and glands stimulates them to flush out toxins that may be causing pain or illness. In addition,

says Honervogt, ki can stimulate the endocrine glands to release hormones that relieve pain and help the immune system combat disease.

William Rand, director of the Center for Reiki Training in

Southfield, Mich., offers another theory: The body's organs and tissues have electromagnetic fields around them that pulse at certain frequencies; when these frequencies are agitated, pain or illness results. Reiki energy readjusts the electromagnetic fields to normal frequencies.

### CASE HISTORY

TWO YEARS AGO Jean Ryle, R.N., a registered nurse at the New England Rehabilitation Hospital in Woburn, Mass., knew she had to do something. She was seeing too many patients suffering from so much pain that they were unable to participate in their rehabilitation. Ryle, who is also a Reiki practitioner, convinced hospital administrators to establish a Reiki program to help these patients get on the road to recovery. Today the New England Rehabilitation Hospital has 12 Reiki practitioners on staff who treat several hundred patients a year.

One such patient needed rehab after back surgery, but was unable to work on her regimen because of severe back-muscle spasms. Ryle performed Reiki through the woman's back brace. Within five minutes, Ryle says, the spasms had disappeared completely and the patient was able to begin doing her physical therapy exercises.

But not all cases are as dramatic as that one, notes Suzanne Rogers, R.N., a registered nurse and head of the hospital's Reiki program. Some experience gradual pain relief or simply feel more relaxed after the treatments, she says. And while not all the doctors at the hospital are convinced of Reiki's benefits, several doctors regularly refer their patients for treatments.

**EVIDENCE** Most of the evidence of Reiki's effectiveness is anecdotal. However, one pilot study on Reiki and pain was conducted at the Cross Cancer Institute in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Twenty patients experiencing various types of pain were treated with Reiki for 1¼ hours. Eighty-five percent of the patients reported significant pain reduction. The study was published in the journal *Cancer Prevention & Control* in 1997. A second study on Reiki's effectiveness in treating cancer pain is underway at the Cross Cancer Institute.

**CAVEATS** According to Roger Greenslate, R.N., Reiki master and registered nurse at St. Francis Medical Center in Peoria, Ill., while Reiki is highly effective as an adjunct to allopathic therapies, it is not meant to replace conventional medical treatment.

**RESOURCES** To locate a Reiki practitioner, contact the International Association of Reiki Professionals at 781-729-3530 or visit its website at [www.iarp.org](http://www.iarp.org). ■

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