Why Reiki Has Been Discounted

For years **Reiki**, along with other methods of holistic therapies were looked upon with disdain, even contempt from medical associations, practitioners, mainstream scientists and clerics. The idea that the human body was permeated or surrounded by an invisible, etheric body of **"life force energy"** was considered to be no less than nonsense.

These negative conclusions were formulated on the premise that "life energy" fields such as those accepted in China as ***Chi* or *qi***, in Japan as ***ki*** and in India as ***prana*** , were "unseen" and "immeasurable" by traditional research or scientific instrumentation.

But now all that is changing.

William Lee Rand - Founder of the International Center for Reiki Training



Reiki Clinical Studies, Improved Reporting

There's never been a comprehensive list of controlled, **evidence-based** research that was accessible to the holistic, medical, and scientific communities. It wasn't until 2005 when William Lee Rand, founder and president of the International Center for Reiki Training and a pioneer in worldwide Reiki awareness formed the Center For Reiki Research and developed what is now known as **The Touchstone Process**.

What is The Touchstone Process?

The Touchstone Process is actually a peer review method for analyzing the current state of scientific studies done on Reiki programs in hospitals, clinics and hospice facilities throughout the United States. The process of critique is rigorous, impartial, and consistent and incorporates the best practices for scientific review.

William Lee Rand began formulating **The Touchstone Process** after developing the Reiki In Hospitals website, considered to be the most comprehensive compilation of hospitals offering Reiki treatments throughout the world.

The Touchstone Process is unique. Never before have there been so many worthy studies of Reiki gathered, analyzed and evaluated within a single source.

Reiki Case Studies

The most recent data analyzed (during 2008-9) shows strong evidence that Reiki is indeed responsible for a positive biological response in both humans and animals.

The strongest evidence (rated "excellent" in the Process) was reported in the most carefully controlled of

all experiments; non other than laboratory rats. In both 2006 and 2008 stressed-out lab rats received Reiki treatments and they all showed significantly **reduced stress, anxiety and depression responses.** "Sham" or bogus Reiki treatments were given to the placebo group and they showed no reduction in stress, anxiety or depression.

Testing in humans performed between 1993 and 2006 showed ratings from Satisfactory to Excellent, all suggesting that the benefit of Reiki treatments were positive in **controlling pain levels** in humans. There were some "confounding variables", which is typical in hospital (as opposed to laboratory) studies; however, the placebo Reiki treatments in this experiment were by contrast ineffective in controlling pain.

Other examples of Reiki studies performed in hospitals and universities may be found on this related site for Reiki research.

Reiki practitioners treat faculty and staff from Columbia University Health Sciences and New York-Presbyterian Hospital at Employee Health and Wellness Day



Vital Signs

New York Presbyterian Hospital/Columbia University Campus conducted one of the first studies ever performed to determine the effectiveness of Reiki treatments on the autonomic nervous system. This "blind, random study" included a Reiki treatment group, a "sham" treatment group and a "control" group. The testing began with all participants at "baseline" autonomic nervous systems levels. The results within the Reiki treatment group showed a lowering of these levels including heart rate, respiration and blood pressure. These positive results led the team to recommend further, larger studies to look at the biological effects of Reiki treatment.

It's interesting to note that Columbia/Presbyterian was one of the first hospitals to offer Reiki as part of their Integrative Medicine Program (CIMP). The now famous cardiovascular surgeon, Dr. Mehmet Oz brought tremendous attention to Reiki when he invited Reiki practitioners to treat patients during open heart surgeries and heart transplant operations. Dr. Oz is often quoted as saying, "Reiki has become a sought-after healing art among patients and mainstream medical professionals."

Words of wisdom from an internationally recognized Reiki Practioner and author who had been published in peer-reviewed medical journals

Reiki Passes Tests with Flying Colors

There have been many other controlled studies submitted to peer-journals and to The Touchstone Process for review. Ailments and disorders that tested favorably to Reiki treatment include:

1. Post operative pain after tooth extraction

2. Cognition in elderly, related to dementia/Alzheimers

3. Pre-operative relaxation and post-op pain

4. Pain in chronically ill patients

5. Depression and stress

6. Well-being in Reiki practitioners

As of 2009, The Touchstone Process has evaluated **25** test studies that appeared in peer-review journals evaluating the merits of Reiki Treatments. Taking into consideration only the most rigorously controlled studies, the team reported that 83% showed moderate to strong evidence in support of Reiki as a viable, therapeutic healing modality.

Only one study proved solidly negative and that was for the treatment of fibromyalgia-associated pain levels. As is the case with conventional drug treatments, not all therapies prove to be effective.

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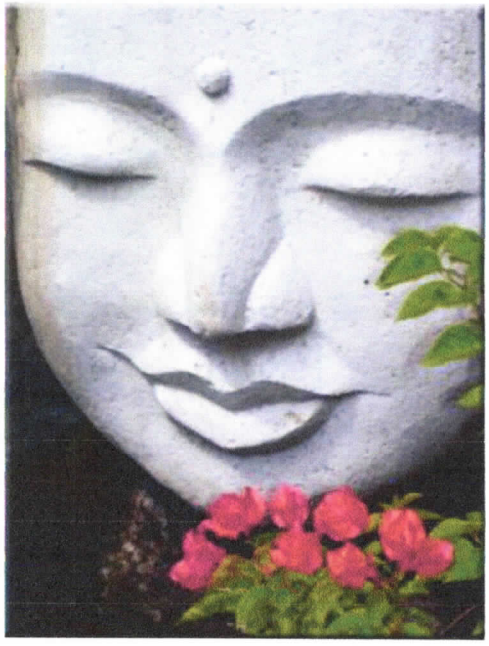

Thinking Positively

Despite these findings and the impressive number of highly reputable hospitals offering Reiki Treatments to patients, there will be those who continue to deem Reiki and other forms of energy-medicine as being "nonsensical".

As recently as 2009, reviews of randomized studies"of Reiki research conducted by Edzard Ernst, M.D., Ph.D. and his colleagues at the University of Exeter, concluded that most were poorly designed and presented insufficient evidence to suggest that Reiki was an effective method for healing any condition.

That same year, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops came out with a statement urging Catholic health-care facilities and clergy not to promote or support Reiki therapy. They issued a statement emphatically concluding that Reiki cannot be an effective method of healing "within the findings of natural science or in Christian belief".

One can only look to the future of science and the evolution of scientific testing, evaluation and responsible reporting which began with The Touchstone Process to alter these perceptions.

imra.org

The good news is that in a press release dated Sept. 15th, 2008, The American Hospital Association

President and CEO Rich Umbdenstock stated, ""Complementary and alternative medicine has shown great promise in supporting and stimulating healing. It's one of the many tools hospitals look to as they continue to create optimal healing environments for the patients they serve."

According to a 2008 AHA the survey, 84 percent of hospitals indicated patient demand as the primary rationale in offering complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) services including Reiki and 67 percent of those surveyed stated "clinical effectiveness" as their top reason.

65 of those hospitals are listed on the Center for Reiki Research's website including-

- Duke Integrative Medicine, Durham, North Carolina
- New York Presbyterian Hospital/Columbia University Medical Center Campus, New York, New York
- Yale–New Haven Hospital, New Haven, Connecticut
- Sharp Memorial Hospital Inpatient Cancer Support Services, San Diego, California
- Children's Hospital Boston, Boston, Massachusetts
- Citrus Valley Medical Center Cancer Resource Center, Covina, California

In addition, the American Medical Association (AMA) has added Complimentary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) treatments to their directory of billable procedures.

Here are links to other medical journal articles on the positive effects of Reiki

- Herbert Irving Child and Adolescent Oncology Center - New York Presbyterian Hospital
  Herbert Irving Child and Adolescent Oncology Center
- Healing emotional pain and stress leads to healing physical pain and illness.
- Healers in the Operating Room - Article from healthpoints E-newsletter
  Breast program welcomes alternative practitioners before and during breast surgery. Physicians, surgeons, and nursing staff at NewYork-Presbyterian/Columbia understand that emotional well-being plays an important role in healing, and they do as much
- Reiki - Medical Research
  Medical research and other papers on the benefits of Reiki treatment

Conclusion

A spokesperson from Columbia Integrative Medicine Program at the New York Presbyterian Hospital (CIMP) perhaps expresses it best, saying,

"I find the practice of Reiki very rewarding, as a practitioner. Patients have reported deep relaxation and a sense of profound healing, after one session. I feel that Reiki is a huge asset for any hospital setting, because patients sense that they are in a truly caring environment."

As Reiki continues to become "a huge asset" for the hospital setting, analytical reporting such as The Touchstone Process continues to add to the much needed pool of evidence that Reiki is indeed a worthy, effective method for facilitating the healing process; one that can contribute to the betterment of patients everywhere and to the betterment of our health care systems.

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Reiki, the Scientific Evidence

BY ANN LINDA BALDWIN, PHD

PEOPLE WHO HAVE GIVEN and/or received Reiki know, first hand, how energizing it feels and how one's worries seem to melt away after a session. However, people who have not experienced, or even heard of Reiki may naturally be more skeptical, and may not want to venture into the unknown. What is really needed is scientific evidence showing exactly what Reiki can do to promote health and wellness. Fortunately, the Center for Reiki Research (CRR) has set up an easily accessible website (www.centerforreikiresearch.org) in order to promote people's scientific awareness of Reiki. This site provides a list of evidence-based research published in peer-reviewed journals along with a critical summary of each study. The list is kept up to date and currently includes 33 studies. The summaries of the studies were produced by carefully analyzing the quality of each study in terms of experimental design, methodology, results, statistics, and conclusions, using a procedure developed by CRR named The Touchstone Process.

The following is a distillation of findings from the more robust of the studies (as scored 'Very Good' or 'Excellent' by The Touchstone Process in terms of the above criteria) that demonstrate positive physical effects of Reiki.

Probably the most commonly reported benefit of Reiki is that it reduces stress. One of the first places in the body that stress manifests itself is in the heart and circulation. Heart rate and blood pressure both increase during stress and these responses are caused by increased activity of sympathetic nerves in the heart. On the other hand, increased activity of the parasympathetic or vagal nerves causes the heart to relax. Studies have shown that Reiki can reduce the stress response of the heart in both humans and animals. Friedman et al (2010) found that when nurses gave Reiki to 12 patients recovering from acute coronary syndrome, a disease involving blockage of the coronary arteries, the vagal nerves became more active, indicating a relaxation effect, as reflected by changes in the heart rate variability. This was a good sign because medications that enhance vagal nerve activity, such as beta-adrenergic blockers, improve the outcomes of patients with this type of heart disease. So in this case Reiki was having a similar effect as a medicine that is a known effective therapy for heart disease. The increase in vagal nerve activity was statistically significant compared to the results from the groups of patients who listened to meditative music (13 patients) or just received standard care (12 patients). Unfortunately the study did not include a sham Reiki group, in which someone untrained in Reiki mimics the hand-positions of Reiki, and so we do not know whether just touching the patients, without giving Reiki, would have the same effect.

Studies of Reiki on animals provide particularly robust data because the animals are all kept under the same controlled conditions and so variations in diet and lifestyle that are present in human studies are eliminated. This means that the results are easier to interpret unambiguously. Baldwin and colleagues (2006, 2008) showed that Reiki, compared with sham Reiki, significantly reduced the physiological effects of stress in rats. In previous experiments, Wilson and Baldwin (1998) discovered that their research rats were stressed by the noisy environment in which they were housed and that the stress was manifesting in the body as shown by cellular damage. Baldwin wondered whether giving the rats Reiki would (i) reduce their stress and (ii) heal the damage, and so she designed experiments to test this hypothesis. In one study (Baldwin et al, 2008), a Reiki practitioner sat in front of

...there is preliminary scientific evidence that Reiki reduces stress, pain, depression and anxiety, and can help mild Alzheimer's patients to overcome their cognitive impairment to some degree...

each of three cages and sent Reiki to the pair of rats inside each cage for 15 minutes every day for five days. Reiki significantly decreased the mean heart rate of the stressed rats by 6% on average, and sham Reiki had no effect. Neither Reiki nor sham Reiki reduced blood pressure. One reason that Reiki reduced heart rate but not blood pressure could be that blood pressure depends on multiple factors, including heart rate, force of contraction of the heart, and the degree of contraction or relaxation of the blood vessels, so Reiki would have to affect all these factors in order for blood pressure to be reduced. It is possible that longer sessions of Reiki may be required to achieve these changes.

In the other study, Baldwin et al (2006), showed that the rats stressed by their noisy environment also had damaged blood vessels in the mesentery, the sheet of tissue that holds the intestine together. The damaged regions in these tiny blood vessels were leaky to a large protein, albumin, in the blood. Normally, albumin is contained in these blood vessels and does not leak out into the tissue. This condition is necessary in order for the correct balance to be obtained between water in the blood and water in the tissue. It is not known exactly how stress causes damage to blood vessels but it is probably linked to activation of nerves in the intestine, leading to release of neurotransmitters that may stimulate immune cells to release toxins. When four rats were given Reiki for 15 minutes a day for three weeks most of the leaks disappeared. Four rats that received sham Reiki also showed some reduction in the number and size of vascular leaks but it was not statistically significant. The experiment was repeated on two other groups of rats and a similar result was obtained. These experiments show that Reiki can work on animals, even rats, to reduce their stress and to heal the cellular damage mediated by the stress.

Another frequently reported benefit of Reiki is that it reduces pain. Vitale and O'Connor (2006) showed that Reiki significantly improved preoperative relaxation and reduced postoperative pain in women undergoing hysterectomies. The 12 women in the Reiki group received a 30-minute treatment immediately before surgery and 24 hours and 48 hours post surgery. The 10 women in the control group received standard care only. There was no sham Reiki group. Data were collected using the State component of the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory and a visual analog scale for pain measurement. The Reiki group reported significantly less anxiety pre-surgery and significantly less pain 24 hours post-surgery than the control group. Interestingly, the time duration of the surgery was shorter on average for the Reiki group (59 minutes) than the control group (72 minutes).

Chronically ill patients often not only feel pain, but also get depressed. Dressin and Singg (1998) demonstrated a significant reduction in the pain, depression, and anxiety experienced by chronically ill patients with a range of medical conditions who received Reiki compared to sham Reiki (two sessions per week for five weeks). In these experiments there were 12 men and 18 women per group. The men experienced a significantly greater reduction in depression than the women. These beneficial effects were still seen three months after completion of the Reiki treatments. Shore (2004) showed that 30 people needing treatment for mild depression or stress, and who received hands-on Reiki or distance Reiki once a week for six weeks, experienced significant reduction of mild depression and stress and the beneficial effects lasted for at least one year following treatment. The measures used in this experiment were the Beck Depression Inventory, the Beck Hopelessness Scale, and the Perceived Stress Scale. The 15 patients in the sham distance Reiki group who were told they would receive distance Reiki but actually did not, reported no significant change in their depression or stress.

Finally, people who regularly use Reiki often find it helps them think more clearly and improves their problem-solving capabilities. Although no research has yet been published confirming these benefits in healthy people, Crawford et al (2006) demonstrated that four 30-minute Reiki treatments, once a week, significantly improved cognition skills in 12 elderly patients with mild Alzheimer's disease or mild cognitive impairment compared to the 12 patients who received no treatment. The measures used in this study were the Annotated Mini-Mental State Examination and the Revised Memory and Behavior Problems Checklist. Once again, the study did not include a sham Reiki group, and so we do not know the role that touch and personal attention played in helping the patients regain some of their cognitive skills.

Overall, although the studies are small and some of them do not address the question of Reiki versus touch, there is preliminary scientific evidence that Reiki reduces stress, pain, depression and anxiety, and can help mild Alzheimer's patients to overcome their cognitive impairment to some degree. To find out more about these studies, and others, you can visit the CRR website, www.centerforreikiresearch.org, or read our review, The Touchstone Process. An Ongoing Critical Review of Reiki in the Scientific Literature (Baldwin et al, 2010).

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