The effectiveness of Tai Chi, Yoga, meditation and Reiki healing sessions in promoting health and enhancing problem solving abilities of registered nurses

Reference

Purpose of Study
The purpose of the research was to identify experiences and perceptions that the nurses considered to be meaningful during the 3-month course of the self-care offerings.

Objective/goals/hypotheses
The guiding hypothesis: Use of self-care practices to reduce stress incurred by registered nurses in the demanding hospital environment will have a positive effect on retention by decreasing turnover.

Methods
Registered nurses at University of California-Davis Medical Center were encouraged to participate in one of four self-care classes; Reiki healing sessions, Sivananda Yoga, Tai Chi, or guided Meditation. The classes were held at various times and nurses were given the option of choosing the session that best fit their taste and schedule.

Nurses were asked to keep a journal over the 3-month period that the classes were given with emphasis on two questions: (1) Describe any sensations or feelings you noticed during or after the session and (2) Have you noticed any changes in your nursing practice since the last session? Please describe those changes. Other, additional questions were also included.

The Journals of 35 nurses (71% of session participants), all with consistent weekly participation, were collected and analyzed using a Heideggerian phenomenological approach by two review authors. The authors identified themes and meaning units collating the data so that final unifying repeated concerns were identified.

Results
The three main unifiers found were: (1) Noticing sensations of warmth, pulsation, and calm, (2) Becoming aware of an enhanced problem solving ability, and (3) Noticing an increased ability to focus on patient needs. It is noteworthy that the nurses consistently described feeling more positive about their work after participating in self-care classes.

Strengths
Positive aspects included a careful ‘sifting’ of the journal entries for meaning and impact.

This research is consistent with recent literature that self-care practices are important for professional nurses and Reiki appears to be included as an option.

Weaknesses
The qualitative outputs are very hard to standardize; the participants were very diverse (basically any RN who wanted to sign up); 4 practices were included so there was little ability to compare across treatments. This mix of variables led to confounding results.

Heidiggerian qualitative analyses are grounded in phenomenology whereas traditional examination of the lived experience is usually through interview format.

This is an innovative research approach; however, the method would be strengthened if an independent decision-audit trail and member checking were utilized during data analysis and interpretation to assure rigor of analysis and minimize bias.

It would have been good to have a control group that simply kept journals without taking the classes.

Additional comments
More detailed research follow-up as suggested by the authors, such as offering nurses ongoing self-care options, including Reiki and studying the effects on work satisfaction, nursing retention and holistic health are appropriate based on these preliminary findings.

This qualitative work can be considered as part of the emerging research about the importance of self-care for nurses working in stressful environments.

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