Reiki for cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy in a Brazilian hospital

Reference

Purpose of Study
The purpose of this pilot study was to explore whether individualized Reiki given to cancer patients at a Brazilian hospital improved symptoms and well-being.

Objective/goals/hypotheses
The goal was to focus on the patients' experience of the disease rather than on changes in specific, preselected endpoints. The authors used an adapted version of the self-report tool Measure Yourself Medical Outcome Profile (av-MYMOP), which allows the patient to elaborate on his or her experience of the disease, the symptoms bothering him or her the week before the interview, and how it has affected his or her physical, functional, professional, and social activities.

Methods
Cancer patients were included if they were undergoing chemotherapy for 5 consecutive weekdays and not participating in any other CAM study. The two Reiki practitioners were Usui Reiki Masters. For the 5 patients experiencing severe pain, a pain visual analog scale was also applied. Data from 36 patients (age 16-77 yrs, 10F, 26M) who received 5 Reiki sessions were collected using the MYMOP and were compared before and after their treatment and also with 14 patients who did not receive Reiki and who acted as a comparison group.

Results
In the Reiki group, 21 patients reported feeling better, 12 felt worse, and 3 reported no change. Of the comparison group, 6 patients reported feeling better and 8 felt worse. More than half the patients in the Reiki group, and fewer that half the patients in the standard care group, experienced feeling better, but this difference was not statistically significant.

Strengths
This study is important because it reinforces the usage of Reiki in a complementary within a conventional oncologic treatment regimen.

Weaknesses
The study was non-randomized, non-blinded (no sham Reiki group) and the group numbers were small and unequal. The treatment space was small, noisy and strongly lit which may have reduced the efficacy of Reiki.

Additional comments
Interestingly it is noted that Reiki as the widest utilized complementary method within the Brazilian Health system, and that Reiki is seen as non invasive, having no contraindication, and easy and simple. While this study is outside the US/UK, the Brazilian tertiary care system is highly developed, and a huge health care system.