

The Role of Reiki in the Medical Setting to Reduce Stress and Relieve Anxiety

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Reiki is an ancient healing art recognized by the National Institute of Health as a form of alternative medicine.

It is an energy therapy based on the belief that an unseen energy flows through all living things and directly affects the quality of a person's health. This belief has been part of the wisdom of many cultures since ancient times.

It has also been described as a therapy based on the biofield, or a type of energy field that "regulates everything from our cellular function to our nervous system" [1].

The Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston describes Reiki as a relaxation technique, while the Cleveland Clinic describes Reiki as a safe, gentle, non-invasive form of natural hands-on, energy-based healing [2,3].

It is well established that Reiki is utilized by hospitals, hospices, professional athletes, the military, corporate wellness programs, celebrities and many individuals for its many benefits.

Reiki has been integrated into the hospital setting with the American Hospital Association reporting in 2007 that more than 800 hospitals offer it nationwide. Hospitals offering it include the Cleveland Clinic, the Mayo Clinic, Johns Hopkins, Dana Farber Cancer Institute, Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital and The Children's Hospital in Boston.

Reiki is commonly given in the emergency room, pre-op, in the operating room, post-op, and in oncology, cardiology, orthopedics and internal medicine.

A reiki session can help ease tension and stress and support the body to facilitate healing. Reiki complements all types of medical and therapeutic treatments and increases the efficacy of these treatments. It is not a substitute for medical treatment.

The Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston has one of the largest Reiki volunteer programs in the country. I am part of their program and work in pre-op. The following is a quote from their website:

"Our data, based on feedback from patients, family members, and staff members who received Reiki sessions, as well as outside research show that Reiki promotes relaxation, relieves stress and

anxiety, reduces pain and fatigue, and improves overall quality of life" [4].

The benefits of Reiki include stress reduction, relaxation, pain reduction, and muscle tension reduction, nausea reduction, and sleep improvement, acceleration of healing and psychological healing.

Reiki treatment benefits noted by the Mayo Clinic and the Cleveland Clinic include:

- Reduces anxiety
- Initiates the feeling of security, peace and wellness
- Brings a peaceful, deep relaxation
- Helps to relieve pain
- Reduces stress
- Stimulates the body's immune system
- Stimulates tissue and bone healing after injury or surgery
- Supports the well-being of the client who is receiving medical treatments

The largest ongoing study of Reiki in the clinical setting continues to be conducted at Columbia/HCA Portsmouth Regional Hospital, Portsmouth, NH, where more than 8,000 surgical patients have been given pre- and post-surgery Reiki treatments. Treatments are given by trained RNs, physical therapists, technicians and support staff. Research results continue to be consistent. All the patients in this study who received Reiki had the need for less anesthesia, had less bleeding during surgery, used less pain medications, had shorter lengths of stay in the hospital, and indicated greater satisfaction with their hospital experience than other patients [5].

A research study at Hartford Hospital in Hartford, CT indicates that Reiki:

- Improved patient sleep by 86 percent
- Reduced pain by 78 percent
- Reduced nausea by 80 percent
- Reduced anxiety during pregnancy by 94 percent

There is an abundance of anecdotal evidence of the effectiveness of Reiki for reducing stress and anxiety [6]. However, there is a lack of well-designed research studies. An example of one of these follows.

PubMed, a database of peer reviewed journal articles from the National Library of Medicine in the United States listed the following research study, Reiki for Depression and Anxiety, Joyce J, Herbison,

Cochrane Database Syst Rev. 2015 Apr 3; (4). Selection Criteria: Randomized trials in adults with anxiety or depression or both, with at least one arm treated with Reiki delivered by a trained Reiki practitioner. The author's conclusions: There is insufficient evidence to say whether or not Reiki is useful for people over 16 years of age with anxiety or depression or both.

In the selection criteria, one might look at the body area treated, an arm. In traditional Usui Reiki that was brought to the United States from Japan by a Reiki Master/Teacher named Takata; the arm is not included in the traditional Reiki body patterns. Takata taught three body patterns in Reiki: head, torso and back. In addition, the article did not define the level of Reiki training the practitioners had. One might ask if they were Level I, Level II, Advanced, or Master and if they were all the same level. The website of the Portsmouth Regional Hospital noted that in 1 review of 3 Reiki studies, researchers found that more experienced practitioners appeared to have a greater effect on pain reduction.

Because of the anecdotal findings of medical professionals and hospitals, there is a new movement in the country for Reiki research to potentially justify the need for health insurance companies to provide coverage for Reiki treatments. Medical Reiki Works, founded by Raven Keyes, is the lead organization, and Sheldon Feldman, MD, lead researcher is Chief, Division of Breast Surgery and Breast

Cancer Oncology, Montefiore Medical Center, and immediate Past President of the American Society of Breast Surgeons. For more information or to become involved in this research, please see www.medicalreikiworks.org or bostonreikimaster.com.

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