

Reiki Research Review

Wardell, D.W. & Engebretson, J. (2001) Biological correlates of Reiki Touch healing. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 33(4), 439-445.

This study was conducted in Texas in 2000 to look at the effects of a single Reiki treatment on stress. A group of 23 English-speaking people were recruited by means of flyer distribution. 29 applied, but certain pre-existing diseases were screened for, and eventually a group of 18F & 5M were selected. One 30 minute session of Reiki with a Reiki master was scheduled, and none of the participants had previously experienced Reiki.

A number of measurements were taken before, during and after the treatment. Blood pressure, salivary cortisol levels, EMG and GSR, SIgA (a measure of immunity which is depressed during stress), patient perception of stress using the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory. Consent forms were signed by all participants. Members of the research team were present in the room during treatments. Participants wore a BP cuff, plus electrodes which were attached to the forehead and sternocleidomastoid muscle. The Reiki practitioner placed a tissue over the client's eyes, and proceeded to perform Reiki for 15 minutes over the eyes, and 15 minutes on the abdomen.

The results showed that salivary cortisol levels reduced in 15 clients, but increased in 7, however, SIgA levels showed a significant rise across the board, which was promising. Systolic blood pressure also dropped, but some other measurements did not show a significant change. Perceived anxiety levels dropped. The authors concluded that Reiki treatment showed both biochemical and physiological changes towards relaxation in clients, and that the increase in SIgA levels warranted further research.

The authors also acknowledged some shortcomings in the study, such as the lack of a control group, and just a single session of Reiki being assessed. However, the number participating was above the level of 14 which was judged critical to achieving any significant result.

Comment

While this study doesn't tell us anything we didn't already know, it is a very useful one for us to know about. Serious studies of Reiki aren't very common, and a finding of a significant increase of SIgA levels was a very good result. Stress and its effects on lowering immunity is a big problem today, along with elevated blood pressure. More studies which duplicate these findings would be good, but this particular article would be a good one to show doctors, nurses and other medical practitioners. I would have liked more discussion in the article about the implications of the changes in salivary cortisol levels. While the general trend was for reduction, 7 showed elevation. Whether this was due to such variables as shift work, random events outside the trial, or some other issue was not mentioned. A repeated study on a larger group over several sessions, with a control group that simply sat in a chair for 30 minutes each time would be step up.

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