

Reiki Research Review

Tsang, K.L., Carlson, L.E. & Olson, K. (2007) Pilot crossover trial of Reiki vs rest for treating cancer-related fatigue. *Integrative Cancer Therapies*. 6(1):25-35.

A Canadian study has come up with some very positive findings for the use of Reiki with cancer sufferers who experience fatigue. Sixteen participants (13F, 3M) of median age 59 (range 34 – 84) with a diagnosis of cancer, who were experiencing fatigue were involved in a randomised crossover trial which was designed to test whether Reiki was of greater benefit than bedrest. One group began with five daily Reiki sessions, given by a Reiki master. They then had a week off, followed by two more Reiki sessions, and then a week of scheduled rest for 45 minutes each day (roughly the same time as Reiki treatment would take). The crossover group began with the rest sessions, then had the 5 days of Reiki, a week without, and two more Reiki sessions.

Recognised measurement tools were used before, during and after the trial to assess the levels of fatigue and quality of life. After the 5 days of Reiki, if fatigue levels rose by a certain amount, the two final Reiki sessions would be brought forward, but researchers were surprised that this was not required.

Compared to pre-trial, the post-trial scores for tiredness, pain and anxiety were significantly better after the Reiki, and scores for quality of life were also higher compared to those who had the rest periods only to that point.

The researchers stated that there is very little research into cancer-related fatigue. These findings are promising, and more research is needed, both into the condition, and the use of Reiki. The pilot trial was not without some shortcomings, including the small sample size, the lack of a pure control group who undertook rest only, and the fact that the rest periods were unsupervised, and the trialist's word was accepted on compliance. The researchers also propose further trials using "sham" Reiki against the real thing to examine placebo effects or the specific effects of the one Reiki master that was used for this trial.

Commentary

I think it's extremely promising for Reiki that trials and research are undertaken and published in scholarly journals. While we know what we can do with Reiki, the orthodox medical profession is still highly sceptical, and the better and more widespread the trials, the more evidence we can use in arguing for Reiki to be funded for inclusion in normal medical settings.

The use of "sham" Reiki is an interesting one. From a research point of view, this would approximate a normal and logical control on a study, which is required to isolate the effects of Reiki against non-treatment. However, from the point of view of a Reiki practitioner, it seems to unfairly deny treatment to people who need it badly. If I were to take part in such a trial, particularly where the condition was life-threatening such as cancer, and where time was a factor in whether the patient survived, I would feel uncomfortable in denying treatment to some patients, even to prove a point. It would become much easier if this type of research was carried out on non-life-threatening conditions, such as peptic ulcers, migraines or the like.

© Patrice Connelly

B. Nat Therapies, Adv. Dip. Naturopathy, Reiki Master