

Reiki Research Review

Baldwin, Ann L & Schwartz, Gary E. (2006) Personal interaction with a Reiki practitioner decreases noise-induced microvascular damage in an animal model. *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*, 12(1), 15-22

Experiments using both animals and Reiki are very rare in the scientific literature. This double-blind, randomised study took place at the College of Medicine, University of Arizona. The authors noted that many hospitals in the UK and US have very high levels of noise, and wanted to determine firstly whether this caused microvascular damage in rats and secondly whether Reiki had any beneficial effect on noise-affected animals. Sixteen Sprague-Dawley rats were used for the experiment, and divided into four groups. One group received 15 minutes of 90dB noise for a set time daily for 3 weeks, plus a Reiki session. The second group received noise plus sham Reiki, while the third group had noise and no treatment, and the fourth control group did not receive any noise or treatment. Many precautions were taken to make sure that confounding factors were minimised.

The Reiki sessions were conducted by a female Level 2 Usui-Reiki practitioner with 3 years experience. There was no contact with the rats; Reiki was sent from a distance of about four feet to the first group of rats. At the same time, a student with no knowledge of Reiki or any healing modality copied the practitioner's movements in giving sham Reiki to the second group. Daily questionnaires were issued to the Reiki practitioner and the student to assess their psychological state. After three weeks, the rats were anaesthetised, and surgery was performed to assess the state of the vasculature. Those performing the surgery had no knowledge of which groups the rats belonged to.

After the surgeries were completed, in order to make sure that the results were not confounded and were reproducible, the same experiments were conducted again, firstly with a different practitioner and another student, and finally with the first practitioner and student.

The results were significant, in that all of the Reiki treated rats had very much better results in all three experiments than any of the other groups except the control which were not subject to any noise. The 3rd group were worst affected, followed by the 2nd group with noise and sham Reiki. 55-70% of the venules of those two groups had multiple leaks. The group receiving Reiki had much smaller and fewer leaks. The results were consistent across all of the three series of experiments. The authors conclude that Reiki has definite benefits for relaxing laboratory animals, and potential for minimising stress in humans. They advocate more research in this area.

Commentary

This was a very well-written and thorough study with a good literature review and a useful bibliography. The use of animals that have been bred and kept under identical conditions may not please everybody, but the study was approved by the relevant ethics committee of the university, and from a research point of view, it avoids a number of confounding factors in human subjects such as emotional stress, dietary differences, genetic traits and so on. The use of 'sham' Reiki here is much less contentious than in an earlier study I reviewed, where humans with a serious illness were randomly assigned to groups, some of which did not receive the benefits of Reiki.

The strongly significant results make this yet another paper which can usefully be shown to sceptics of Reiki and energetic healing.

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