

Symptomatic Improvement Reported After Receiving Reiki at a Cancer Infusion Center

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Dawn A. Marcus, MD¹, Betsy Blazek-O'Neill, MD², and Jennifer L. Kopar, CAVS³

Abstract

Objective: To evaluate patient-perceived benefits from receiving Reiki at a cancer infusion center. **Methods:** During a 6-month period, adults at a university hospital receiving Reiki through volunteer services were invited to complete a survey asking about perceived changes after Reiki. Changes in pain, mood, distress, sleep, and appetite were rated on a 5-point scale from no benefit to great benefit. Surveys were distributed after completing treatment and were returned in postage-paid envelopes. **Results:** A total of 145 surveys were completed (34.5% response rate), with 47 participants seen in the cancer infusion center and 98 in other areas of the hospital. Reiki was rated as a positive experience by 94% at the cancer center and 93% of others, with 92% at the cancer center and 86% of others interested in receiving additional Reiki sessions. Symptomatic improvement was similar for people at the cancer center and others, respectively, with much to great improvement for 89% and 86% for relaxation, 75% and 75% for anxiety/worry, 81% and 78% for improved mood, 43% and 35% for improved sleep, 45% and 49% for reduced pain, 38% and 43% for reduced isolation/loneliness, 75% and 63% for improved attitude, and 30% and 30% for improved appetite. Response was unaffected by previous exposure to Reiki, massage, or other touch therapy. **Conclusion:** Reiki results in a broad range of symptomatic benefits, including improvements in common cancer-related symptoms.

Keywords

Reiki, cancer, infusion, complementary, touch therapy, pain

In June, Birocco and colleagues published an important article describing significant improvements for patients with cancer receiving Reiki during chemotherapy infusions.¹ Benefits included significant reductions in pain and anxiety levels as well as improvements in well-being, relaxation, and sleep quality. Evaluations of voluntary satisfaction surveys distributed to patients at our center likewise confirm benefits of Reiki administered at a cancer infusion center.

During January through June 2012, Reiki practitioners serving as volunteers at a tertiary care teaching hospital were asked to give surveys to recipients of Reiki therapy that could be completed anonymously and returned to the volunteer office. Reiki recipients were asked to provide demographic information and to rate their response to the Reiki service. Benefits from the Reiki treatment were rated on a 5-point scale (1 = no benefit, 5 = great benefit). The surveys were consecutively numbered to determine the response rate.

During the study period, Reiki was delivered by 20 Reiki practitioners who logged a total of 683 volunteer hours. A total of 420 surveys were distributed and 145 (34.5%) were completed and returned. The average age of the participants was 57.6 ± 13.9 years. In all, 78 participants were female, 18 were male, and 49 did not select a gender. Reiki was

provided at the cancer infusion center for 47 participants and in other areas within the hospital for 98 participants. Responses were positive and similar for those individuals receiving Reiki at the cancer center and others, with 93.6% at the cancer center and 92.9% of others rating their overall Reiki experience as positive. A total of 91.5% at the cancer center and 85.7% of others stated they would like to receive another Reiki treatment and 70.2% at the cancer center and 87.7% of others would recommend Reiki to someone else. Symptomatic improvement was similarly endorsed for cancer center participants and others (Table 1). Half (53.8%) of those receiving Reiki had previously received Reiki, massage, or another touch therapy. Response was similar for those previously exposed to Reiki, massage,

¹ Department of Anesthesiology, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA, USA

² Department of Integrated Medicine, West Penn Allegheny Health System, Pittsburgh, PA, USA

³ Volunteer Services, West Penn Allegheny Health System, Pittsburgh, PA, USA

Corresponding Author:

Dawn A. Marcus, MD, Suite 400, Pain Medicine Centre Commons Building, 5750 Centre Avenue Pittsburgh, PA 15206, USA.

Email: marcusd@upmc.edu

Table 1. Percentage of Reiki Recipients Scoring Symptom Improvement as Experiencing Much to Great Benefit (Scores 4 or 5).

	Cancer center	Other hospital areas
Increased relaxation	89.4	85.7
Reduced anxiety/worry	74.5	74.5
Improved mood	80.9	77.5
Reduced stress	83.0	72.5
Improved sleep	42.5	34.6
Reduced pain	44.7	49.0
Reduced isolation/loneliness	38.3	42.8
Improved attitude	74.5	63.3
Improved appetite	29.7	29.6

or another touch therapy and individuals for whom this was the first experience.

Interpreting these data is limited by the voluntary and the anonymous nature of the survey. Surveys were completed and returned by a minority of individuals who may have been those who experienced a more extreme response. Furthermore, limited information was collected for participants and some of the participants treated in other areas of the hospital may have also been diagnosed with cancer. These data, however, do support the experience reported by Birocco and colleagues,¹ showing a broad range of symptomatic benefits with Reiki, including improvements in common cancer-related symptoms such as pain, mood disturbances, and isolation/loneliness.

Therapies to reduce emotional distress and isolation may be particularly important as these symptoms have been linked with cancer progression.²⁻⁴

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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