

USE OF HEALING TOUCH FOR SUPPORTING CANCER CARE

The diagnosis of cancer often brings feelings of fear, anxiety, and loss. The treatment phase of the disease focuses on the destruction of cancer cells which often can impact healthy tissue as well. Healing Touch is able to provide a supportive environment for the person undergoing treatment. It may also help to decrease some of the side effects of treatment and help to improve quality of life. Healing Touch may also help to reduce [anxiety](#), decrease [pain](#), and aid in recovery after [surgery](#).

One researcher in the area of cancer care has conducted a study which meets the "gold standard" of research. In this study by Cook et al. (1), 62 women receiving radiation treatment for gynecological and breast cancer were randomly assigned to either a treatment or control group. Those who received Healing Touch demonstrated better quality of life in all nine domains measured with significant differences in vitality, pain, and physical functioning. In another study (2), massage therapy, Healing Touch, and "presence" were compared during cancer treatment. Both massage and Healing Touch were found to significantly reduce levels of pain and reduced mood disturbance. There was also less fatigue in the Healing Touch group. One small study found that a Healing Touch intervention significantly improved fatigue and nausea, and showed improvements in distress and pain in those undergoing cancer treatments (3).

Another research method used interviews to understand persons' experiences of receiving Healing Touch during cancer treatment. The themes described Healing Touch as providing a sense of caring, a way of connecting, and an ability for the patient to open to trust (4, 5). Further, Healing Touch was found to be a process by which they were able to see themselves as whole and having a sense of wellbeing. Additional themes emerged in another study as Healing Touch helped them to get through treatment and helped them to keep going (6). Patient satisfaction surveys for those receiving Healing Touch during treatment demonstrated improved relaxation, improved sense of control, positive change in energy, improved sense of well-being, decreased pain, and decreased side effects of cancer treatments (7, 8, 9).

A number of programs for persons undergoing cancer treatment developed out of an innovative cancer support program called "Bosom Buddies" in Hawaii in the mid '90s. In this program, women with breast cancer were offered Healing Touch over the course of their treatment. The success of this program has spread across the United States and now has various names including Healing Partners (Stanford Hospitals), LifeSpark Cancer Resources (Denver, Colorado), Healing Touch Buddies (Jupiter, Florida), and the Healing Touch Buddies Program (Amsterdam, New York).

Healing Touch can often provide a sense of comfort and connection during difficult cancer regimes. After recovery, cancer survivors often learn Healing Touch and participate in service programs for cancer patients as a way to give back to others the benefits they perceived to be obtained during Healing Touch.

Below are citations of studies mentioned above. More on other [studies with cancer](#).

1. Cook, C.A.L., Guerrerio, J.F., Slater, V.E. (2004). Healing Touch and quality of life in women receiving radiation treatment for cancer: A randomized controlled trail, *Alternative Therapies in Health and Medicine*, 10(3), p. 24-41.
2. Post-White, J., Kinney, M.E. Savik, K., Gau, J.B., Wilcox, C. & Lerner, I. (2003). Therapeutic massage and Healing Touch improve symptoms in cancer. *Integrative Cancer Therapies*, 2(4), 332-344.
3. Danhauer, S.C., Tooze, J.A., Holder, P., Miller, C., Jesse, M.T., Carroll, S., Larrimore, D., Campbell, C.R., & Kemper, K.J. (2007). Healing Touch as a Supportive Intervention for Adult Acute Leukemia Patients: A Pilot Investigation of Effects on Distress & Treatment-Related Symptoms [abstract]. *Healing Touch Research Survey Addendum*. Lakewood, CO.
4. Christiano, C. (1997). The lived experience of Healing Touch with cancer patients. Unpublished master's thesis, Florida International University, Miami.
5. Moreland, K.M. (1998). The lived experience of receiving the chakra connection of women with breast cancer who are receiving chemotherapy: A phenomenological study. Unpublished master's thesis. University of Windsor, Canada.
6. Kopecki, D. (2001). The experience of healing touch in women with breast cancer. Unpublished master's thesis, The Sage Colleges, New York.
7. Brannon, J. (2002). A patient satisfaction survey for cancer patients experiencing Healing Touch at the cancer wellness center [Abstract]. *Healing Touch International Research Survey*, June, Lakewood, CO: Healing Touch International, Inc.
8. Merritt, P. (2006). Effects of Healing Touch and other complementary therapies on diabetes. [Abstract]. *Healing Touch International Research Survey*, 8th Ed. Lakewood CO: Healing Touch International, Inc.
9. Turner, K. (2006). Preliminary Data Analysis of the Healing Partners Program. *Healing Touch International Research Survey*, 8th Ed. Lakewood CO: Healing Touch International, Inc.