

ENERGY MEDICINE FOR THE INTERNIST

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Energy medicine includes a broad variety of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) therapies (Table 1). The term *energy medicine* derives from the perceptions and beliefs of therapists and patients that there are subtle, biologic energies that surround and permeate the body. It is suggested that these energies may be accessed in various ways through CAM for diagnostic and therapeutic interventions. Energy medicine may be difficult to understand and even more difficult to accept as a possibly effective intervention without explanation and a review of research.

Some energy medicine therapies are provided in a manner similar to the delivery of Western medicine. That is, the therapist performs the intervention directly, as in acupuncture and homeopathy. Most CAM therapies encourage patients to participate in their own healing; this places the therapist in the role of consulting and advising rather than treating patients directly. When these therapists intervene directly, it is to enhance the natural functions of the patient (see Table 1).

Various theories are offered as to how such interventions may influence the patient. These theories propose the existence of many biologic energies that are alleged to sustain life and through which therapists may treat various illnesses. This article describes the author's

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Table 1. ENERGY MEDICINE MODALITIES

Modality	Therapist Required	Self-Healing
Acupuncture	+	
Applied kinesiology	+	+
Autogenic training	+	+
Ayurveda	+	+
Biofeedback	+	+
Breathing	+	+
Chinese (Oriental) medicine	+	+
Chiropractic	+	
Crystals, gems	+	+
Dance	+	+
Diet	+	+
Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing	+	+
Flower essences	+	+
Healing	+	+
Herbs	+	+
Homeopathy	+	+
Hypnotherapy	+	+
Imagery	+	+
Intuitive assessment	+	+
Iridology	+	
Light therapy	+	+
Magnets	+	+
Massage	+	
Meridian-based therapies	+	+
Movement/posture	+	+
Music	+	+
Native American healing	+	+
Naturopathy	+	+
Nutrition	+	+
Osteopathy	+	
Craniosacral	+	
Psychoneuroimmunology	+	+
Qigong	+	+
Reflexology	+	
Shiatsu	+	
T'ai Chi Chuan	+	+
Tibetan medicine	+	+
Yoga	+	+

own general theory, in Western concepts, followed by the traditional theories of the CAM modalities.

Spiritual awareness, the inner sense of being a part of something vastly larger and wiser than the self, can be an important therapeutic component of energy medicine. This component is especially common with spiritual healing and self-healing approaches and is related to the spiritual awareness of the practitioner.^{7, 11} Patients experiencing energy medicine treatments may report that they feel an inner peace, a spiritual

guidance, and a reconnection with their spiritual or religious roots. This feeling may occur with no prompting on the part of the therapist or may arise out of a deliberate quest for a spiritual connection through practices of meditation and imagery. This aspect of energy medicine may be helpful to patients who are dealing with serious or terminal illnesses. Spiritual awareness also may be helpful to terminally ill patients and their families in dealing with dying.

ENERGY MEDICINE THEORY

General Theory

Early in the twentieth century, Einstein proposed that matter and energy are interconvertible ($E = mc^2$). Quantum physics has confirmed that individuals can address the world they live in as matter or as energy, even though this contradicts everyday perceptions of the world of Newtonian physics. Although the chair one is sitting on feels solid, one knows it is composed of tiny atomic and subatomic particles that are held together by atomic and subatomic forces. Viewed through quantum equations, the chair also could be described in terms of energy. Modern medicine, based on Newtonian principles, has been slow to consider the possibility that these same principles may apply to biologic matter. A living body can be described within quantum theory as energy.

Energy medicine practitioners have been saying for centuries that there is a physical body and an energy body. The two are not mutually exclusive. The bioenergy body surrounds and interpenetrates the physical body and interacts with it. Energy medicine practitioners report that they provide treatment through the energy body, influencing the physical body, emotions, mind, relationships, and spirit.^{6, 12, 48}

In the early years of quantum physics, many were skeptical about theories that contradicted those of Newtonian physics. During the twentieth century, these doubts have been dispelled through experiments that confirm quantum theories. Newtonian physics is accurate in describing the physical world as perceived by the five senses. This description is only a limited part of the spectrum of explanations for how the world can be understood, however. Quantum physics does not invalidate Newtonian physics. It describes the molecular, atomic, and subatomic parts of the spectrum of the world that are outside of ordinary awareness.

Energy medicine practitioners suggest that the same explanation applies to energy medicine. Energy medicine does not contradict conventional medicine. It is an extension of the understanding of biologic systems on the energy side of Einstein's equation. If this explanation is true, we are in the early stages of understanding and integrating such

conceptualizations of the world. Similar to the field of Newtonian physics in the early part of the twentieth century, Newtonian medicine is having a difficult time accepting energy medicine theory. Until more recently, it was difficult to accept even the possibility that there might be energy medicine approaches that could not be explained by Newtonian medicine. Although many of these therapies had been practiced for several thousand years, they had not passed the test of the randomized controlled trial. In the 1980s and 1990s, growing numbers of randomized controlled trials were published for many energy therapy modalities. A selection of these trials is highlighted in this article.

The mechanism of action of biologic energies purportedly used by CAM practitioners is unknown. Suggestions include activation or unblocking of patients' energies, projection of the practitioners' own energies, channeling of energies by the therapist from nature (e.g., the earth, cosmic energies), and interventions of spiritual agents (e.g., spirits, saints, Christ, Buddha, God).^{8, 45} Many CAM modalities have their own variations on these theories that are relevant to their particular approaches. These are considered under each modality.

Alternative General Theories for Energy Medicine

Suggestion or *placebo effects* are the most obvious alternative explanation of energy medicine. An element of suggestion is present in CAM therapies, as it is in conventional therapies. Randomized controlled trials suggest, however, that several CAM therapies are of significantly greater benefit than the effects of suggestion shown in the mock-therapy control groups.^{6, 40}

The opposite case also may be possible. Many of the myriads of beneficial effects of suggestion have not been explained adequately. It is conceivable that some of these derive from energy medicine interactions between therapists and patients or from self-healing.

Spontaneous remission has been proposed to explain isolated cases of unusual cures.⁵¹ Because there is no mechanism proposed for the apparently spontaneous changes occurring sometimes in some illnesses, it also is possible that instances of so-called spontaneous remission represent responses to energy medicine or self-healing interventions that were not reported by the patients or documented by the researchers. This hypothesis is supported by several observations on energy medicine interventions. First, there are cases in which improvements occurred rapidly after energy medicine interventions, with major improvements or total cures of chronic conditions that previously had been unresponsive to all other therapies.⁴² Second, it is rare in the literature on spontaneous remission to have investigators ask about energy medicine interventions.

A contributing factor is the reluctance of recipients of CAM therapies to mention these to their physicians, fearing criticisms or rejection.³¹

Nonlocal consciousness, in which the awareness of the therapist may connect with the awareness of the patient, is an alternative explanation for some of the effects obtained with energy medicine.^{8, 28} Rather than an exchange of energies, there could be an exchange of information. Energy medicine practitioners suggest that the mind, acting through biologic energies, can influence states of health and illness profoundly. The therapist may reprogram in some way the patient's disease patterns of perception, behavior, or bioenergy states, promoting changes toward health.

INTEGRATIVE CARE

More physicians are becoming familiar with energy medicine and related approaches.² Physicians were wary of using therapies that were of unproven value, and little research evidence was available in support of these therapies. *Alternative medicine* was an appropriate term for these therapies because patients often resorted to these rather than to conventional medical care and hesitated to reveal to their physicians that they were using them. Eisenberg's landmark articles^{31, 32} revealed that Americans had more visits with alternative medicine therapists than with primary care physicians and were paying almost as many dollars annually out of pocket as were being paid (with the help of insurance) for conventional medical care. As some physicians have become convinced of the benefits of these therapies, they have introduced them as *complementary* interventions along with standard medical treatments.

Integrative care blends CAM therapies with conventional medical care in a spectrum of combinations. At one end of the spectrum are practices in which bits and pieces of energy medicine modalities are imported into Western medicine, such as needling certain acupuncture points to assist in pain management or recommending homeopathic arnica or rescue remedy flower essence for stress. Further along the spectrum, physicians refer patients to energy medicine practitioners for help with aspects of their problems. With full integration, CAM practitioners are invited to work in the physicians' offices, and physicians may learn to practice energy medicine therapies themselves.

Wholistic medical practice is promoted by many energy medicine therapies and by a growing number of physicians. Most of the energy medicine therapies are derived from cultural therapeutic traditions that have developed over many centuries, some over several millennia. They may include cosmologies and theories for underlying mechanisms that are alien to Western ways of thinking.⁶ Although each has its distinct

practices, a common underlying theme among most energy medicine therapies is that each person is treated as a unique individual.

Wholistic practice addresses the person who has the disease, not just the disease the person has. Energy medicine promotes awareness of *dis-ease* and disease in body, emotions, mind, relationships, and spirit. (*Wholistic* with a *W* is used to distinguish it from the common usage of *holistic* to indicate inclusion of a smattering of CAM techniques with conventional medical care.) Each person is addressed as an individual. His or her unique personality, life experiences, and current state of being are considered in deciding on therapeutic interventions. Today, more than half of medical schools in the United States include courses in CAM therapies, and growing numbers of physicians are exploring how to make these therapies available to their patients.

ENERGY MEDICINE THERAPIES

Most CAM therapies involve some aspect of energy medicine, although this may not be a prominent component of the intervention. As with suggestion, it may be impossible for a therapist not to have a bioenergetic interaction with a patient, although in many cases this could be entirely unconscious to both participants. The following discussion focuses on CAM therapies in which energy medicine is a major component of the intervention.

Spiritual Healing

Energy medicine is illustrated most clearly with various forms of spiritual healing, such as Reiki,⁵⁷ therapeutic touch,^{43, 44} and Qigong.¹⁶ Healers may report sensations in their hands such as heat, tingling, vibration, electrical sensations, or cold, and patients may feel similar sensations in the part of their body being treated.⁴

Spiritual healers and many other therapists who are sensitive to bioenergies report they can palpate with their hands an energy field surrounding the body. Some report they also see an aura of color surrounding the body. Various layers of these energy fields are perceived to reflect the physical, emotional, mental, relational, and spiritual conditions of the person.⁶ A healer may feel with his or her hands a *stickiness* or unusual heat or other sensations over a part of the body that is diseased. The energy fields are believed to be templates for what occurs within the body, being shaped by genetic, mental, emotional, and environmental factors. In addition to sensing people's conditions, healers can enhance people's states of health by interacting with the bioenergy field.

Healers treat with a laying on of hands, their hands touching or held a few inches away from the body. At the same time, healers hold a mental intent, meditative focus, or prayer for the improvement of the healee. Some healers may direct flows of energy by moving their hands or through mental focus. Other healers believe they are simply channels for healing energies that come through them from nature or from a divine source. Qigong healers teach self-healing meditations and gentle exercises that promote a healthy flow of subtle energies.⁴ Healers commonly claim they can treat with equal effectiveness from any distance, even from many miles away. Although this claim stretches Newtonian understandings of the world, studies support that prayer healing sent from many miles away can enhance treatments of patients with acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS)⁶¹ and of patients hospitalized in cardiac intensive care units.^{13, 41}

Healing often opens therapists and patients to personal spiritual awarenesses. This awareness may include an inner knowing that a person is part of a vast, collective consciousness, that angels and spirit guides are there to support him or her, or that Christ or Allah unconditionally accepts and loves him or her.⁷

Research

There are 120 randomized controlled studies in humans, animals, plants, bacteria, yeasts, and enzymes that suggest spiritual healing can be effective for pain, anxiety, depression, AIDS, hypertension, arthritis, wound healing, and other problems.^{4, 5} A study of healing sensations by a 10-year-old girl was given wide publicity when it was published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.⁵⁸ This study showed that therapeutic touch healers were unable to determine when the girl's hand was held about 10 inches from the healers' hand. The journal editor, Lundberg,⁴⁸ enthusiastically endorsed this study, interpreting it to mean that any claims for the efficacy of spiritual healing were hereby invalidated. An alternate analysis of this study^{4, 5, 29, 46} is that it is seriously flawed in several ways. Holding the experimenter's hand still at one steady distance from the healers' hands is totally unlike the clinical practice of healers, who move their hands laterally around the body and closer to and further from the body. Healers were tested in a laboratory while being videotaped, which could interfere with their mental focus. Healing generally is given when there is a need on the part of the patient for treatment. It is unclear whether it is the healer who activates the process by giving healing or whether the healer merely provides a source of healing from which the patient takes that which is needed. There are 120 other studies showing significant effects of healing (some of which were cited as references in the study of Rosa et al⁵⁸ but not

discussed). The conclusions of Lundberg that this one science fair study invalidates all claims for effectiveness of healing is patently ridiculous.⁴

Adverse Effects

Healing has no serious side effects. An occasional side effect is that symptoms such as pain may increase in the first few sessions. This effect is taken by experienced healers as a good sign, indicating that the energetic components that lie behind the symptom are being released. When treatment is continued, symptoms usually improve.

Indications

Spiritual healing is an excellent therapy of first choice because it can be given as a complement to any other therapy, with no side effects or dangerous interactions with other treatments. Almost any problem may respond to healing.^{4, 5, 27} Healing may be given along with every other treatment.

Craniosacral Osteopathy and Network Chiropractic

Chiropractic and osteopathy classically treat through physical manipulations of the skeleton, particularly of the spine. Craniosacral osteopathy and network chiropractic extend these practices into energy medicine. Using the lightest of touch and sometimes holding their hands near to but not touching the body, these therapists report they sense and regulate flows of energies and may direct healing intent or healing energies to the patient. Without a physical manipulation (e.g., massage or spinal manipulation), profound changes may occur in chronic conditions for which conventional medicine has no cure.^{64, 65}

Network chiropractic produces results without physical manipulations. The therapist uses light touch, bringing about effects that appear to be equivalent to those produced by chiropractic physical manipulations. This treatment is said to be based on a bioenergy intervention.³³

Craniosacral osteopaths report that they sense with their hands subtle bioenergy pulsations around the head. Through mental intent, they alter these pulsations when they intuitively perceive that it is appropriate to do so. This activity brings about effective clinical changes, although these may be of different quality from those of the physical manipulations, extending to emotional and spiritual responses in addition to physical changes.

Research

No studies have been published on network chiropractic. A British study of light touch manipulative technique, a method that closely resembles network chiropractic, showed significant effects for back pain, however.³⁰ There has been no research to confirm the efficacy of cranio-sacral osteopathy.

Adverse Effects

As with spiritual healing, there are no known deleterious effects of network chiropractic or craniosacral therapy. Because the touch used in these therapies is light, without physical manipulation, there have been no injuries.

Indications

Clinical reports indicate craniosacral osteopathy can be helpful in treating problems for which conventional medicine may be limited in treating, such as pain in the back and neck; fibromyalgia; frozen shoulder and carpal tunnel syndromes; arthritis; scoliosis; chronic ear infections; hormonal abnormalities; postinjury and postillness symptoms of head injury, meningitis, and encephalitis; behavioral, developmental, and learning disorders in children (sometimes attributed to cranial birth injury); sacral injuries; chronic neuralgia syndrome; high blood pressure; temporomandibular joint pain; strabismus; amblyopia; migraine headaches; cluster headaches; trigeminal neuralgia; chronic fatigue syndrome; tinnitus; vertigo; asthma; lymphedema; plantar fasciitis; shin splints; tennis elbow; and golfer's elbow.²⁶ Research has yet to confirm many of these claimed benefits of craniosacral therapy.

Acupuncture

Acupuncture and various derivative therapies identify *meridians* (lines of energy) running from the head to the extremities. Along the meridians, there are *acupuncture points* that relate to anatomic parts and physiologic functions in various parts of the body. Stimulating these points is said to release unhealthy blocks in energy flows along the meridians, which in turn improves the functions of the related organs. Acupuncture points can be stimulated with needles, physical pressure, electrical stimulation, or laser light.

Within acupuncture theory, meridians correspond to *bioenergy* (biologic energy) functions of the body that overlap with but are different from physical organ functions. The bladder meridian relates to urinary

functions but also may relate to weak legs, brittle bones, and stiffness in the spine. Diagnoses in acupuncture relate to whether bioenergies are flowing smoothly, blocked, or congested. Abnormal activity in one meridian influences energy flows in other meridians. Although such explanations are difficult to understand within a Western scientific paradigm, they have their own coherence and provide a basis for treatment that has been successful for a major segment of the world's population over several thousand years of practice. Acupuncture is discussed in more detail in another article in this issue.

Many therapies have been derived from acupuncture. Acupressure, reflexology, and shiatsu address problems through finger pressure at various acupuncture points. Applied kinesiology addresses muscle strength in particular muscles as they reflect the energy flows in various meridians.

Applied Kinesiology

Applied kinesiology is derived from acupuncture theory and practice. Specific muscles are related intimately to each meridian. When there is a dysfunction in that meridian, the related muscles reportedly are weaker than normal. By testing the strength of a series of muscles, applied kinesiology practitioners diagnose bioenergy dysfunctions in the meridians.^{22, 66} Applied kinesiology practitioners pass their hands around the body to correct the flows of energies in the meridians in a structured way that relates to the meridians they are addressing.

Applied kinesiology may be used as a general adjunct to other therapies. When people are in harmony within their conscious and unconscious awareness, in relationship to themselves and their physical and social environment, their bioenergy system (reflected in their muscle strength) is good. When they are out of harmony, their muscle strength is weak. General muscle strength (not related to specific meridians) may be used as an indication and measure of their state of bioenergetic harmony. For example, if a person is allergic to wheat and wheat is brought close to his or her energy field, the applied kinesiology practitioner notes whether the muscles become weaker. This gives the therapist a way of testing what a person might be sensitive or allergic to. Conversely, various remedies may be brought near a person to determine whether they strengthen the bioenergies, as reflected in increased muscle strength.³

In psychotherapy, applied kinesiology may be used to explore whether particular thoughts influence patients positively or negatively. If they think of a traumatic incident in the past and their muscles are weakened, it suggests that emotions attached to this memory may be

producing an energetic imbalance. A variety of techniques may be used to help release the negative emotions, following which one can check muscle strength to determine to what extent these negative influences have cleared.^{36, 37}

Research

No research has been published to validate the claims of applied kinesiology.

Adverse Effects

No adverse effects related to applied kinesiology are known.

Indications

Applied kinesiology is claimed to be effective in treating allergies, digestive problems, and stress-related illnesses.

Meridian-Based Therapies

Meridian-based therapies use pressure points along various acupuncture meridians to release negative patterns of emotional and physical response. Anxieties, posttraumatic stress disorders, fears, pains, and allergies are reported to be alleviated rapidly and permanently with techniques such as thought field therapy,¹⁴ emotional freedom technique,¹⁸ Tapas acupressure technique,³⁵ and other variations on these approaches. These therapies are used under the direction of a therapist but may be used by patients on their own as self-healing.

Chakra therapies may be used individually or may be included as aspects of other approaches. The *chakras* (Sanskrit for *wheels*) are major energy centers said to exist along the midline of the body that channel bioenergies to organs locally and throughout the body. Bioenergy therapists report they can sense the chakras with their hands, and sensitive people who see auras may report they see colored disks at the chakra points. These, similar to the biofield as a whole, are said to reflect one's condition and provide an avenue for access of healing energies. Healers may direct treatment to particular chakras or may suggest that patients hold their hands over particular chakras for self-healing.¹⁵

Research

There has been no research published to support the enthusiastic clinical reports of patients and therapists who are using these techniques.

Adverse Effects

No adverse effects of meridian-based therapies are known. The author has found the meridian-based therapies extremely potent for relieving anxieties, severe emotional traumas, pains, and allergies. These techniques have enhanced the author's practice of psychiatric psychotherapy profoundly and have been enormously helpful personally in dealing with professional and personal stresses. The author has begun teaching these methods to physicians and other medical staff for stress reduction.

Indications

Meridian-based therapies are helpful for posttraumatic stress disorder, anxieties, phobias, poor self-esteem, and performance enhancement.¹⁷

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing

Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR) relies on alternating stimulation of the left and right sides of a patient's body to bring about release of fears and traumatic memories and to install positive cognitions and feelings. Although initially EMDR used only right-left-right-left eye movements, it has been found that touching a patient's right and left sides or making alternating sounds in the right and left ears can have the same effects.⁶⁰

In practice, a person decides on something that he or she wishes to change, such as a fear of speaking in public. The person assesses how strong this fear is on a *subjective units of distress scale* of 0 (not at all) to 10 (the worst it could be) at the moment he or she starts this round of treatment. The person focuses on the fear while the therapist provides alternating right-left stimulation. After a few minutes, the person pauses to reassess the intensity of the negative feelings. In most cases, the intensity decreases. When the intensity is decreased to 0, the person can install a positive perception in a similar manner. For instance, the person states, "I can speak with confidence in front of any crowd," assessing his or her level of confidence in this statement. Then the therapist repeats the alternating stimulation to build up the positive.

Research

An impressive body of research suggests that EMDR can be helpful with posttraumatic stress disorders, even when they are of the severity of those experienced by Vietnam War veterans.³⁹

Adverse Effects

In the process of releasing negative emotions, painful memories, previously long-buried and forgotten, may resurface. The patient is encouraged to feel in control through an agreement with the therapist that they will stop processing feelings if the patient feels they are too intense for comfort. These uncomfortable releases usually are transient and dissipate as the alternating stimulation is continued. If a person panics and stops in the middle of a session, the feelings may persist.

Indications

EMDR is helpful for posttraumatic stress disorder, anxieties, and phobias. See the experiential exercise using a hybrid of EMDR and meridian-based therapies at the end of this article.

Flower Essences

Similar to homeopathy, remedies have been produced from various flowers and plants, based on the symptoms they produce when ingested by normal people. Remedies are made by placing the desired part of the plant in water for a period. These remedies tend to be more helpful with psychologic and relational issues but may help with some physical problems.⁵⁹

Shamanic herbalists in traditional cultures have reported that plants speak to them, telling the shaman how they can be helpful in a generic way and for specific patients. In a similar manner, some highly sensitive healers have developed flower essences intuitively. That is, they psychically sense the spectrum of benefits of a plant and develop an essence from the plant rather than going through the clinical procedures for testing the spectrum of the plant's effects. Topical applications of flower essences have been found to be helpful for various problems. Various skin zones of the body are said to correspond to internal organs and to different illnesses and dysfunctions^{24, 25} (see also www.livingessences.com.au).

It is proposed that a biologic energy pattern is imprinted in the water. When ingested or used topically, these remedy energy patterns interact with the biologic energies of the healee to promote healing.

Research

Cram^{19, 20} reported controlled, double-blind studies on effects of combinations of flower essences that commonly are used for treating stress. Electromyograms, used as a measure of stress, showed significant

decreases of tension over the mastoid processes and the chest with the essences compared with placebo. Cram²¹ also found benefits of flower essences in depression. These studies, limited in scope and methodology, are the only available ones to date.

Adverse Effects

Occasionally, there are temporary worsenings of the symptoms, as the energy patterns of illness are unblocked or released.

Indications

Flower essences are reported to be helpful in stress, pain, and depression.

Imagery

Mental imagery can be used to focus and use bioenergies. Healers may visualize that they are projecting healing energies to treat a particular part of the body, to unblock obstructed energy flows, or may visualize that they are withdrawing excesses of energies.^{43, 44} Healers report that if they visualize that they are projecting their own bioenergy they may become tired from energy depletion. To prevent this and to be maximally effective, healers visualize that they are channels for unlimited universal energies. Healers report that when they use these visualizations of channeling energies, they themselves are energized rather than depleted during treatments.

Imagery is used in self-healing.¹ Patients may be encouraged to visualize that they are inviting healing energies into their bodies to treat their problems. Pains may be imaged as a red color, then pictured as being washed away by the healing energies. Shifts in the color toward pink, then white are common as the pain dissipates. People with allergies may find that imagery of having a bioenergy shield surrounding them similar to an egg or space suit decreases their allergic reactions.

Immune system activity may be enhanced through imagery.^{55, 63} Patients with cancer have been encouraged to picture that their white cells are sharks or white knights that can eliminate any unwanted cancer cells. It has been postulated that immune cells may communicate directly with brain cells through the dozens of neuropeptides that they share in common.⁵⁴ Another postulated mechanism for mental influence over the immune system is through bioenergies, as described earlier.⁶

Research

Imagery exercises may enhance immune system activity. Locke and Hornig-Rohan⁴⁷ reviewed 1453 professional articles on this subject in an annotated bibliography. Simonton and Sherman⁶³ reviewed numerous studies in which imagery (often combined with psychologic interventions, meditation, and relaxation) appeared to influence the course of patients with cancer, reducing morbidity and prolonging survival times. More focused studies have shown enhanced immune cell function.

Adverse Effects

There are no known adverse effects of imagery.

Indications

Although there are no clinical controlled studies of the efficacy of imagery alone to alter disease processes, anecdotal reports indicate imagery can be helpful in treating hypertension, accelerating healing of bone fractures, decreasing morbidity in cancer and AIDS patients, and prolonging survival of cancer and AIDS patients.^{23, 34}

Meditation

Meditation may take many forms, all of which help the mind to focus. One may concentrate on a word or phrase (*mantra*), prayer, object, visual image, or activity (breathing, sacred dance). By concentrating mental energies on a single point, the mind becomes much more forceful and powerful. Meditation facilitates the practice of energy medicine in several ways. It sharpens focus and concentration, increasing the ability to connect with one's own bioenergies for self-healing, and brings the practitioner into dimensions of awareness in which the bioenergetic connection between therapist and patient are facilitated. Meditation helps one to connect with spiritual dimensions, connecting the meditator with spiritual inspiration and healing.⁴⁵

Research

Meditation can help with pain, stress, substance abuse, hypertension, muscle tension, high cholesterol, and other problems. Extensive overviews of meditation research have been compiled by the Maharishi International University, covering more than 500 studies and including a meta-analysis.⁵³ Murphy and Donovan⁴⁹ published a review of more than 600 studies. Meditation has been particularly helpful in treatment

of hypertension, pain, and stress responses. The practice of meditation has been found to be cost-effective, in that those who meditate regularly have significantly reduced health care usage.⁵²

Adverse Effects

Emotional releases may occur spontaneously. People who are marginally compensated are at risk for emotional destabilization if they are not prepared or supported in dealing with such releases. Focusing inward in meditative states may be confusing or disorienting and may result in decompensation.

Indications

Meditation is helpful for hypertension, stress, anxiety, pain, and substance abuse.

Intuitive Assessments and Interventions

In the realms of energy medicine, when the therapist connects with the patient, there are times when exchanges of information occur that facilitate the healing; this has been termed *nonlocal consciousness*.²⁸ Energy medicine therapists report they often know intuitively where a patient's pathology is and are guided by intuition to offer bioenergetic interventions. Healers intuitively know where to put their hands, how to direct the energies, and for how long.⁴

Intuition is reported to be helpful in identifying psychologic contributors to physical and emotional problems. CAM counselors may know intuitively that patients have suffered specific physical or emotional traumas that have contributed to their symptoms and illnesses. In giving a 40-year-old woman a laying on of hands treatment for her headache, the author intuited that she was upset over a relationship with a man who was abusive toward her. The woman confirmed this, and she and the author discussed how she could handle her relationship better, at which point her headache subsided. Anecdotal reports exist of similar instances in which anxiety, anger, hurt, or depression were released, and simultaneously backaches, stomachaches, or other physical problems rapidly cleared.^{10, 11}

Research

A few studies confirm that healers may assess correctly with their hands areas on the body of the healee that are in pain.^{4, 5} Several pilot studies suggest that the aura perceived by healers can be correlated with

physical, emotional, and mental conditions of people they view.^{4,5} Healers using therapeutic touch, Reiki, and other approaches report that they rely on intuitive perceptions to guide their treatments.

Caution

Many intuitive healers believe that they perceive *the* state of the person they are *reading*. In two pilot studies of several healers who viewed the aura of the same person simultaneously, each healer had different perceptions and interpretations of the meanings of these perceptions. The people being viewed confirmed that most of the various perceptions were relevant to their conditions.⁹ Intuitive assessments may be accurate but may relate only to parts of the problems. This is an area requiring further research.

Indications

Intuitive assessment is a noninvasive diagnostic approach with no known adverse effects. It can be a useful complement to conventional assessments.

Other Energy Medicine Therapies

Other energy medicine therapies are anthroposophic medicine, ayurveda, naturopathic medicine, and traditional Chinese medicine. Each of these approaches may include energy medicine as an aspect of their treatments. Homeopathy, a different form of energy medicine, is described elsewhere in this issue.

GENERAL ISSUES OF SAFETY

Side effects of energy medicine interventions are limited. The most common side effect is an increase of symptoms when therapy is initiated and bioenergy patterns are stirred. The increased symptoms generally are viewed as a positive sign that the problem is shifting and prognosticate an improvement with continued treatment.

Delaying other treatments that are potentially beneficial is a conceivable problem. Little research is available, however, to clarify which therapies are best for given problems. The best approach is often to use conventional and energy medicine interventions together. Most energy medicine interventions are excellent complements to conventional interventions.¹⁰

Malpractice insurance is carried by many energy medicine practitioners. These practitioners have a low rate of claims.

PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATIONS AND LICENSING

Acupuncture, chiropractic, and osteopathy are licensed professions in many states. Homeopathy is recognized in some states but limited to physician use. Most of the other energy medicine practices are unregulated and unlicensed. In Minnesota, a law was passed in 2000 permitting CAM therapists to practice without license or restriction as long as their interventions were not invasive or harmful.

CHOOSING AN ENERGY MEDICINE PRACTITIONER

Personality compatibility variables are as important as knowledge, innate gifts, and technical skills. The practitioner is the instrument for providing the treatment. Practical common sense is a helpful counterbalance to bioenergy, intuitive, and spiritual gifts.

Paradigm conflicts may arise between approaches. Some conventional therapies may be viewed by some energy medicine therapists as potentially harmful.

EXPERIENTIAL EXERCISE

Although randomized controlled trials are the gold standard for research, before this step it is possible to explore clinical efficacy of treatments through personal exploration and casual clinical trials, particularly when these are applied easily, without risk. The reader may explore this exercise himself or herself or introduce it to a patient. It takes about 5 minutes for a basic introduction.

Pick a problem you would like to work on. Identify on a scale of 0 to 10 how intense your discomfort is when you focus on this problem. Using your index and middle finger (of either hand), alternate tapping on the median end of each eyebrow, across the bridge of your nose. As you do this, recite this affirmation to yourself: "Even though I have this (*insert words that identify your anxiety, phobia, or residual emotional distress from a past event*), I completely and totally accept and love myself." Take one deep breath and continue to tap your eyebrows while focusing on your problem. After a few minutes, pause and reassess how intense the negative feelings are. You may continue again in a similar manner until you have brought the feelings about the situation down to 0.

It is then possible to formulate a counterbalancing, positive affirmation to replace whatever negatives you have eliminated. Note on a scale of 0 to 10 how

strongly you feel the positive. State the positive affirmation while tapping in the same manner. After a few minutes, pause and note how much stronger the positive feels. Continue until you bring it up to a 10 or as high as you can.

SUMMARY

Growing bodies of clinical experience and research suggest there are major benefits for patients, physicians, and CAM practitioners with the integration of energy medicine with conventional medical care. Conventional medical practice is excellent for infections, surgically correctable problems, hormonal dysfunctions, and some genetic defects. There are many illnesses for which conventional medicine can offer treatment, with medications and surgical interventions. Side effects of medications may be troublesome, and risks may include fatalities. Energy medicine interventions may complement conventional care and have minimal risks. Patients report high satisfaction with energy medicine interventions perhaps because CAM therapists often offer patients significant amounts of time to talk about their problems. Most energy medicine practitioners are not familiar with conventional medical diagnoses or research methodology. Conventional medical wisdom can inform and enhance energy medicine practice by encouraging further research. It is hoped that the future will bring more collaboration, greater acceptance of integrative care, and greater appreciation of energy medicine.

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