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# The Cutting Edge of Energy Medicine and the Latest Science

*Energy medicine techniques refers to the manipulation of subtle energies associated with the body to help improve health and well-being. These energies may go by names such as qi, chi, prana, etheric energy, and more.*

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**A**s a naturopathic physician, I am always thinking about more holistic ways of healing. One interesting method is the use of energy medicine. Energy medicine techniques refers to the manipulation of subtle energies associated with the body to help improve health and well-being. These energies are described differently depending on the energy technique, and may go by names such as qi, chi, prana, etheric energy, and more.

Energy medicine is a field of complementary and integrative medicine that is used to treat various diseases and conditions.<sup>1</sup> The National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health refers to energy medicine as “energy healing therapy.” The goal of energy healing therapy is to restore a normal energy balance, which is thought to be connected to good health.

The belief in a biofield and subtle energies, which is the basis of energy medicine, has been recorded since ancient times. The subtle energy system in the

Vedic tradition and Chinese medicine are examples of models for health and healing developed over a millennium through religious and spiritual beliefs, and thoughtful observations.<sup>2,3</sup> In modern times, an increasing number of studies on energy medicine has expanded our understanding of biofields and energy medicine.<sup>2,4-6</sup>

## LEARNING ABOUT THE BENEFITS OF REIKI

When I was in medical school, I had the opportunity to be trained as a Reiki Practitioner. Reiki, developed in the 1920s in Japan, is one of the oldest and most widely practiced forms of energy healing. In a reiki session, a practitioner channels universal energy from their hands to specific points on a recipient’s body to facilitate a self-recovery response. Reiki can also sometimes be practiced from a distance.

Early on, I was amazed at how I could sense the energy moving in the sessions, and as a recipient I also experienced benefits from each session. When I graduated and opened my private practice, I

continued to use energy medicine with patients. My patients left their sessions feeling calm and relaxed, and many reported experiencing a noticeable decrease in pain, anxiety, and depression.

Later in my research career, I became more aware of the large body of evidence supporting the positive effects of energy medicine therapies like Reiki. Patients experiencing sessions with Therapeutic Touch, Emotional Freedom Techniques, and Thought Field Therapy have reported positive relief from the symptoms of a wide variety of conditions,<sup>2,3</sup> including cancer, chronic pain, anxiety, depression, and trauma.<sup>2, 4-6</sup>

### EXPLORING THE EFFECTS OF ENERGY MEDICINE

Because outcomes of medical treatments tend to be highly variable, understanding what predicts or moderates positive effects helps us apply therapies more effectively. At the Institute of Noetic Sciences (IONS), we were interested in further exploring if energy medicine is effective and how it might work. We were especially interested in if some of the underlying variance is due to well-known factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, and effects of local weather.

### STUDY ON THE EFFECTS OF ENERGY MEDICINE

We conducted a large study with 190 adult participants who had hand or wrist pain,<sup>7</sup> where each participant received one 30-minute treatment from one of 17 energy medicine practitioners. Practitioners delivered treatments at close distance, some with and some without light, stationary touch. We assessed the participants before, during, and immediately after the treatment, and three weeks later, primarily looking at self-reported pain. We also looked at how the participants felt about energy medicine, how much their pain affected their daily quality of life (including sleep quality, mood, and well-being), and ran medical tests (evaluating nerve speed, inflammatory gene expression, and heart beat variability).

We found that the participants experienced reduced pain after the session that lasted for one week, and improvements in well-being, negative emotion, and sleep quality scores. Although the nerve speed and genetic tests didn't reveal any changes, the heart variability tests demonstrated that participants had moved from a stressed to a more relaxed state.

We did a follow-up study with 40 participants who had anxiety, depression, memory problems, an acute injury, or a combination of these issues. After a 30-minute session from a Reiki Master with over 10 years' experience, the participants experienced significant improvements in well-being even up to one week later. The positive results in pain and well-being from these two studies mirror what we see in other studies conducted around the world.

### COULD THE FINDINGS BE CAUSED BY THE PLACEBO EFFECT?

Some people believe that energy medicine effects are the result of a placebo effect, where symptom improvement is your brain creating results rather than being influenced by a treatment. While at IONS, we have gathered much evidence that intention matters and our consciousness affects the physical world, we also propose that energy medicine has a true effect on the health and well-being of participants.

In our two studies, we found that a person's belief about how effective energy medicine was in general, and how much it would help them did not appear to influence their improvements. Our findings showed that the improvements in pain were not significantly different for individuals who strongly believed in the effectiveness of energy medicine versus those who did not. This supports the concept that energy medicine is creating real results in participants beyond a placebo effect.

## DID THE PRACTITIONER OR ENVIRONMENT INFLUENCE ENERGY EFFECTS?

Another interesting finding from both of our studies was that the practitioner did not influence the change in the main outcome. An energy medicine session appeared to help a participant regardless of who was giving the session. Of course, as the energy medicine practitioners in our studies had extensive experience and were vetted to be exceptional, additional studies would be needed to support this result.

We also looked at whether the environment affected the sessions. Many people believe energy medicine may be influenced by things like solar flares or the phase of the moon. In fact, traditional Chinese and other ancient medical systems incorporate these cycles into their treatment plans. In our study, we evaluated 18 environmental variables for possible connections to participant perceived pain relief and nerve conduction velocity measurements. Our findings showed that the barometric pressure influenced changes in nerve speed conduction. In addition, we found that variability in the heart was associated with several solar-related values.<sup>8</sup>

## EXPLORING HOW ENERGY MEDICINE MIGHT WORK

We explored a couple of ways energy medicine might work. Since our bodies are made up of mostly water, perhaps energy medicine was changing the water in our bodies in some way to create positive effects. So in the first study, we had the practitioners and participants wear a vial of water around their neck. We also had the practitioners mimic a session on a vial of water. Interestingly enough, we found that the water around the practitioners' neck and the sample they did a "session" on had changed, with changes revealed in the hydrogen and oxygen bond within the water.<sup>9</sup>

We then looked at whether random noise could have an effect by using quantum noise generators.

Quantum noise, which produces consistently random raw noise, were placed in the room where the sessions took place. After comparing the data from session times to non-session times, we saw a significant difference between the two periods of time. During the energy medicine sessions, the data produced by the generators was more coherent, or less random, compared to during the non-session times.<sup>10</sup> Although preliminary, these results support the increasingly popular physics and cosmology theories implying that information may be a foundational aspect of our universe, and that we can perhaps affect that information.

One last study involved using an individual with extended perception, in other words, the ability to observe the world beyond the normal range of our physical senses. Many people claim they have extended perceptions and can use them to ascertain health information.<sup>11-14</sup> For this approach, we placed one of these individuals in the room to take notes on what she was seeing during each session. The observer reported seeing energy moving between the practitioner and participant, energy qualities in the space, and also various colors.<sup>15</sup> It is important to conduct further studies to validate the abilities of such individuals. Such a skill could be used in a medical setting to potentially help with diagnosis, treatment, and potentially achieve considerable savings in health costs.

**Summary:** Continuing to explore energy medicine for patient therapy. Energy medicine techniques have been shown to improve various aspects of the health and well-being of patients suffering from a variety of conditions. It has consistently been shown to be a complementary technique to conventional medicine with results that last beyond individual sessions. In our studies at IONS, participants experienced tangible relief in pain and improvement in quality of life, with objective tests revealing calming effects on the nervous system. And while we do not have a complete answer as to how it works, our studies showed that energy medicine may be achieving positive results by affecting the water in our bodies

and both tangible and intangible features of our environment.

It is important for the medical society to continue exploring energy medicine as an effective, non-invasive, and natural holistic method for achieving healing and improved well-being in our patients. €

## Resources:

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