

# Therapeutic Touch, Quiet Time, and Dialogue: Perceptions of Women With Breast Cancer

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**Purpose/Objectives:** To compare the perceptions of women with breast cancer to an experimental therapeutic touch (TT) plus dialogue nursing intervention with perceptions of a control quiet time plus dialogue nursing intervention.

**Design:** Qualitative study based on the Science of Unitary Human Beings.

**Setting:** Data collected as part of a larger experimental study of the effects of TT on pre- and postoperative anxiety and mood and postoperative pain in women with breast cancer.

**Sample:** 18 women with early-stage breast cancer.

**Methods:** Telephone interviews at the completion of an experimental or control nursing intervention administered in the women's homes before and after breast cancer surgery.

**Main Research Variables:** Women's perceptions of participation in a study of the effects of dialogue and TT or quiet time.

**Findings:** Content analysis of transcribed telephone interviews revealed few differences in participants' perceptions of experimental and control interventions. Only participants who received the experimental intervention reported body sensations, and only participants in the control group inquired about the study and its purpose. Regardless of experimental or control intervention participation, women expressed feelings of calmness, relaxation, security, and comfort and a sense of awareness. The few women who commented about the nurse who administered the experimental or control intervention indicated that the nurse was empathetic, concerned, supportive, or helpful.

**Conclusions:** The women regarded either nursing intervention as a positive experience. Some also expressed positive regard for the research nurse.

**Implications for Nursing:** Nurses who are not trained in the administration of TT may use quiet time and dialogue to enhance feelings of calmness and relaxation in patients with breast cancer.

## Key Points . . .

- Women's perceptions of an experimental therapeutic touch and dialogue intervention or a control quiet time and dialogue intervention were analyzed.
- Women reported feeling calm, comforted, relaxed, secure, and aware, regardless of the intervention they received.
- Some women may not perceive any specific benefit from a quiet time intervention.
- Some women reported a positive regard for the research nurses.

The purpose of the present qualitative study was to extend knowledge by comparing the perceptions of women with breast cancer about their participation in an experimental TT plus dialogue nursing intervention with those of women receiving a control quiet time plus dialogue nursing intervention. The effects of the experimental and control interventions on anxiety, mood, and pain already have been reported (Samarel, Fawcett, Davis, & Ryan, 1998). The present study was undertaken to better understand women's perceptions of their participation in the study and, thereby, amplify the findings of that study. In addition, the present study afforded the opportunity to identify implications for nursing.

## Background

### Conceptual Model

The Science of Unitary Human Beings (SUHB) (Rogers, 1990, 1992) guided Samarel et al.'s (1998) original

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Therapeutic touch (TT) was introduced by Dolores Krieger and Dora Kunz more than 30 years ago. It is a noninvasive nursing intervention derived from ancient forms of healing, such as laying-on of hands and energy transfer. Several studies of TT already have been conducted; some have been designed to quantitatively measure the effects of TT, others to qualitatively discover the nature of the experience of receiving TT (Easter, 1997; Madrid & Winstead-Fry, 2001; Peters, 1999). Investigators typically call for additional research about the experience of TT and its effects. Easter, for example, pointed out that "research in the use of TT to provide better, improved patient/client outcomes is still a vastly undiscovered area within the realm of nursing care" (p. 164).