

# Reiki as a Clinical Intervention in Oncology Nursing Practice

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Oncology nurses and their patients are frequently on the cutting edge of new therapies and interventions that support coping, health, and healing. Reiki is a practice that is requested with increasing frequency, is easy to learn, does not require expensive equipment, and in preliminary research, elicits a relaxation response and helps patients to feel more peaceful and experience less pain. Those who practice Reiki report that it supports them in self-care and a healthy lifestyle. This article will describe the process of Reiki, review current literature, present vignettes of patient responses to the intervention, and make recommendations for future study.

**T**he National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) lists Reiki as an energy therapy in its classification of complementary and alternative therapies. Energy therapy is defined as one that focuses on energy fields within the body and electromagnetic fields, which focus on fields outside of the body (NCCAM, 2007). Reiki is a Japanese word that is a combination of two characters (Rei) meaning universal and (Ki) meaning life-force energy. Reiki is an ancient healing art involving the gentle laying on of hands, well suited for nurses who provide hands-on care for patients in so many different ways (see Figure 1).

## Philosophy of Care

As in nursing, Reiki therapy is one of practicing the art of presence and compassion. Reiki is not a religion but a philosophy of care that is described by the following principles taught to Reiki practitioners.

- Relate to patients' core or essence, not personality.
- Listen without judging patients' actions.
- Be willing not to know or understand the "why's" associated with patients' presentation.
- Let go of viewing patient's responses following Reiki treatment as the practitioner's personal achievement (Rand, 1998).

Nurses often recognize the importance of entering and leaving another's "space" or energy field and the impact that the presence of one person can have on another. They understand the pattern of patients' energy and use as they care for patients and are licensed to provide treatments that often involve touching patients as a part of the care they provide. In doing so, nurses witness the effects of changes that occur in a patient's energy field during routine nursing care, such as hanging an IV medication, taking a pulse, or teaching about self-care. Reiki practice

## At a Glance

- ◆ The National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine categorizes Reiki as an energy therapy.
- ◆ Review of the literature and clinical responses from patients receiving Reiki provided the foundation for nursing staff at one institution to offer regular Reiki sessions to people living with cancer.
- ◆ Patients consistently reported positive benefits from Reiki sessions.

takes these ideas a step further by acknowledging and working with the vital energy (ki) that patients and nurses possess and merging it with the universal healing energy (rei) through a specific intention of assisting the healing process.

## Reiki Treatment

The serious study and use of subtle energy in nursing and other disciplines is receiving increased attention in the literature

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