

# Effects of healing touch therapy being studied

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Often, a gentle hand on your shoulder when you're upset is all it takes to ease your mind and calm your nerves. Now, University of Cincinnati (UC) researchers are looking at a similar occurrence by pairing a complementary therapy known as Healing Touch with mild sedation to see if the technique truly calms patients undergoing minor procedures.

Healing Touch is a series of techniques that balance energy for wholeness within a person's body, mind and soul. It is an energy therapy that can be used in conjunction with other traditional medical treatments.

Nathan Schmulewitz, MD, the lead author of this investigator-initiated study and assistant professor of digestive diseases, says people undergoing procedures often have problems falling asleep because of anxiety.

Schmulewitz specializes in endoscopic ultrasound (EUS), a technique for imaging and accessing deep structures in the chest and abdomen which are near the GI tract. EUS is used as a screening tool for cancer or other suspicious polyps.

He says if a patient is unable to fall asleep with intravenous sedation, it might be necessary to use stronger anesthesia which is expensive and not often covered by insurance companies.

"In addition, stronger sedation can prolong recovery for the patient and can cause slight amnesia following the procedure," Schmulewitz says.

This study is looking at whether coupling Healing Touch with mild sedation prior to an EUS procedure can help relax patients, avoiding problems with anesthesia and making the procedure run more smoothly.

Judy Bowers, a nurse at University Hospital, Healing Touch practitioner and co-author of the study, has been doing this therapy for about seven years and has administered it to over 40 patients involved in this study.

"By restoring balance within the energy system, you create an optimal environment for healing," Bowers says. "This is complementary medicine, not alternative medicine, so it can be easily incorporated in a medical model."

Although there are many healing touch therapies, this study is only looking at three: the Chakra Connection, which facilitates movement of energy from one energy center to another; Magnetic Clearing, which clears the field of congested energy; and Mind Clearing, which involves a light touch on the face, head and neck.

As part of the study, a third party calls the patient two days after the procedure to ask a number of questions about how Healing Touch affected the patient during the EUS and recovery.

The results are being analyzed, but Bowers says she's observed some fairly positive responses.

"Some of the patients are asleep before they even receive the intravenous sedation," she says, noting that she stays with patients throughout the procedure in order to continue sharing her energy with them and maintaining the balance.

Schmulewitz says if the results are positive, this could be an inexpensive, effective way to reduce costs and improve care at University Hospital.

"It will be a fairly easy way to enhance patient care with acceptable and specific means and without increased risk of injury," he says.

Source: University of Cincinnati

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