

Healing in a Hospital;

Scientific Evidence that Spiritual Healing Improves Health
by Sandy Edwards

A controlled medical study was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of spiritual healing provided by Healing Trust members. With 200 NHS outpatients each receiving five weekly sessions, this is probably the largest healing trial in the world.

The research was led by the University of Birmingham (a Russell Group university), known for first-rate research, in collaboration with Freshwinds, a Birmingham medical charity.

A grant of £205,000 was awarded by the National Lottery to fund the project.

The following two research papers have been officially published in medical journals. These online journals offer open access to the full text, which can be reproduced so long as proper attribution is given to authors and to the journal concerned.

Main, quantitative paper:

A pragmatic randomised controlled trial of healing therapy in a gastroenterology outpatient setting
Published by the European Journal of Integrative Medicine; Volume 9, January 2017

<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S187638201630422X>

The main, quantitative paper reports that patients benefited physically; their symptoms reduced. It also identifies that their quality of life was enhanced; they felt better in themselves and were more able to lead a normal life. Whether measured by score improvements, effect sizes or statistics, results revealed significant improvements regarding symptoms and wellbeing. Improvements were found to be long-lasting and may have continued beyond the period of study. In addition, the researchers confirmed that the level of these improvements was substantially more than could be expected from placebo. The researchers concluded that a study should be conducted to investigate whether adding healing to conventional healthcare would reduce NHS expenditure.

Secondary, qualitative paper:

Experiences of healing therapy in patients with irritable bowel syndrome and inflammatory bowel disease

Published by BMC Complementary and Alternative Medicine; Volume 15, April 2015

<https://bmccomplementalternmed.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12906-015-0611-x>

The secondary, qualitative paper focuses on what patients had to say about their experience. Their comments support the findings of the main paper. Many of them talked about coping better with their condition, and they reported feeling uplifted and more optimistic.

Key points:

1. The National Lottery awarded a grant of £205,000 to fund the project
2. The research was led by the University of Birmingham, a top UK university renowned for world-class research, in collaboration with Freshwinds, a Birmingham medical charity
3. The methodology was approved by a team of scientists appointed by the National Lottery
4. The two-year, controlled medical trial involved 200 NHS hospital patients with longstanding illnesses
5. The medical conditions involved (irritable bowel syndrome and inflammatory bowel disease) put an on-going strain on NHS resources
6. There is no medical cure for either condition
7. Every aspect of a patient's life is affected by IBS or IBD
8. Each patient received five weekly healing sessions in addition to their usual conventional care

9. The healing sessions were conducted by members of The Healing Trust to ensure uniformity of method and professional standards
10. Results revealed clinically and statistically significant improvements in respect of physical issues and also quality of life
11. The majority of gains were retained for 19 weeks after the final healing session. Benefits are likely to have lasted longer but this was the extent of our study
12. People who received all five sessions benefited more than those who had fewer
13. The level of improvements exceeded that which could be associated with placebo
14. Patients enjoyed the experience
15. The researchers concluded that future research should aim to determine whether adding healing to conventional care would reduce costs.

The following book gives more insights regarding the trial, and many of its 200 citations refer to additional healing research:

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'Spectacular research results and a very impressive book. Patients and clinicians should take this seriously.' Dr Michael Dixon LVO, OBE, FRCGP, FRCC; Chair of Council, College of Medicine; Chair of NHS Alliance

'Truly remarkable findings presented in an easy-read style. Stimulating and engrossing.' The Duchess of Rutland, Patron of The Healing Trust

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