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# Assessing Patient Knowledge of, and Preference for, Integrative Healthcare

By Dee Parks RN

Complementary interventions have gained increasing interest in recent years, and healthcare systems must decide whether it is worth the investment to develop programs to bring such services to patients. The purpose of this study is to evaluate patient interest in Healing Touch and other holistic healing modalities as an adjunct to their care.

## Study Methods:

IRB Exemption was obtained through the UC San Diego (UCSD) Human Research Protections Program, and project #120365XX was assigned to the study. Subject recruitment was accomplished through the outpatient Pre-Anesthesia Clinic. The check in staff personnel offered the survey to every patient during pre-evaluation for surgical procedures for a period of three months. Informed consent was obtained via a paragraph at the top of the survey that described the purpose of the study. No formal consent with signature was collected; the patient's voluntary participation in the survey served as consent. Confidentiality was maintained by instructing subjects to not write their name on the survey, and no identifier was assigned to subjects. At the end of three months results were compiled and analyzed. A total of 509 patients responded to the survey, with varying degrees of completion.

Several of the survey questions were directed specifically to Healing Touch. Healing Touch is of special interest because UC San Diego Health System has a nursing protocol in place for Healing Touch as an independent nursing intervention. Healing Touch is an evidence-based energy therapy in which a heart-centered and intentional approach is used to clear, energize, and

balance human and environmental energy fields. This allows the person receiving Healing Touch to achieve a state of deep relaxation that supports the body's natural ability to heal. Gentle touch assists in balancing physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being. A significant majority (77.02%) of study patients indicated that they would choose to receive Healing Touch if it were offered. This is particularly interesting in light of the fact that 74.65% indicated that they did not know anything about Healing Touch.

## Results:

As stated above, 74.65% of the patients studied denied any prior understanding of Healing Touch. Seventeen percent answered that they "understand a little bit about Healing Touch;" and 8.32% answered, "I am very familiar with Healing Touch." When asked if they had ever received Healing Touch, 86.88% said they had never received Healing Touch; 9.54% said yes, but not often; and 3.58% answered, "Yes, I use HT as part of my ongoing healthcare." The third study question asked patients if they would choose Healing Touch if it were offered. Of the 397 patients who responded to this question, 77.02% said yes, with 22.98% answering no.

Patients were also asked about other integrative modalities they have used. The vast majority of patients studied (79.74%) have had massage; 50% have used acupuncture; 34.44% reported meditating; 24.83% have used aromatherapy; 12.91% have received Reiki; 11.92% had bio-feedback; and 11.26% have practiced Qi Gong and/or Tai Chi. Patients were also asked what therapies they were interested in. Interestingly, the response profile for this question was similar to the previous



**Dee Parks RN, CNIII**, began her nursing career in 1982 as a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN), and obtained her Registered Nurse (RN) license in 1995 after graduating from Allen School of Nursing in Iowa. Dee worked in critical care in Iowa, and as a travel nurse; and then joined the UC San Diego Health System to work as a recovery nurse in 2003. She became interested in energy healing in 2009, and is trained in both Reiki and Healing Touch. Dee became a Reiki Master in 2012, and volunteers her services through Reiki Wind and the San Diego Reiki Organization. Her professional focus is on establishing a hands-on healing practice within the hospital setting, and on promoting awareness of the modalities that can be partnered with Western Medicine to improve patient outcomes. Dee is building on the results of the study described in her article, and is currently developing a study, in partnership with Anita Darcey RN, to examine the impact of Reiki on nursing work-related stress. Aside from her passion for energy healing, Dee enjoys tending her vegetable gardens, bicycle riding, swimming in the ocean, and creating ceramic art pieces in her studio.

question, with even greater percentages of patients showing interest in these modalities. Of the 305 patients who responded to this question, 76.72% were interested in massage; 55.74% in acupuncture; 44.26% in meditation; 37.38% in aromatherapy; 28.85% in Qi Gong and/or Tai Chi; 27.54% in bio-feedback; and 26.23% in Reiki.

### Discussion:

This study utilized a brief survey to assess patient interest in and preference for Healing Touch and other complementary healing modalities. Limitations of the study include a self-selected population. Patients who chose to participate may be those who already have an interest in complementary modalities. Indeed, the responses to open ended questions revealed that a large portion of participants already incorporate complementary modalities into their healthcare.

The responses to the survey illuminate the fact that people are pursuing integrative modalities that they believe will have health benefits outside of the medical community, even though these are not covered by insurance plans. The interest that patients show for complementary healing modalities suggests that UCSD

has good reason to invest resources to provide Healing Touch and other complementary modalities to patients as part of their care. The results will be useful in informing future therapeutic studies and programs to bring Healing Touch and other complementary modalities to UCSD patients.

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