

# Reiki found to help ease pain, relax cancer patients

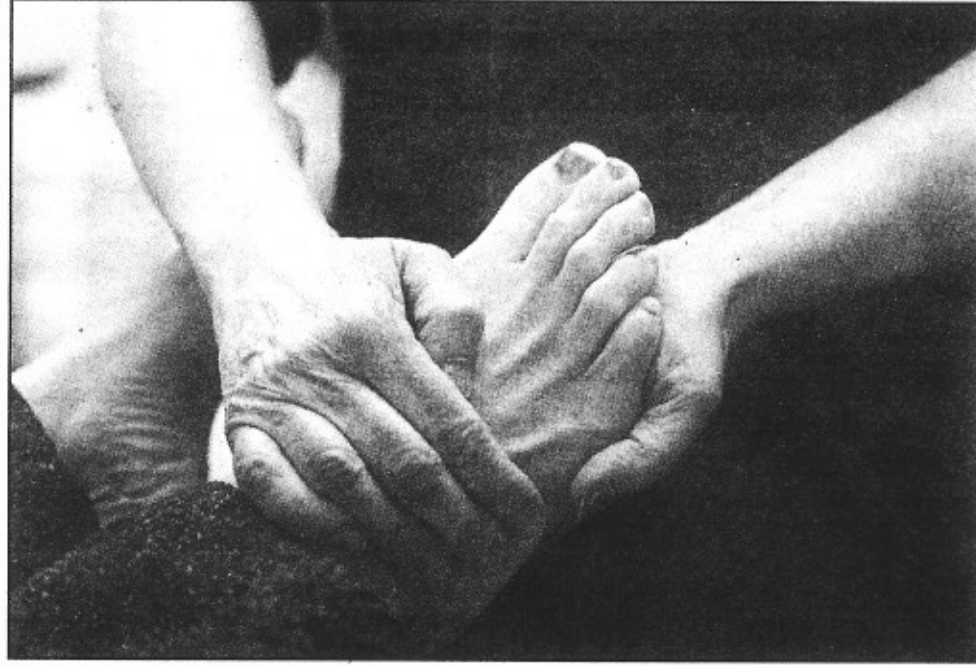
By Wendy Langenderfer

When I first saw Debbie Bott, she was curled into a fetal position on a gurney, in too much pain to receive her scheduled radiation treatment. I told her the staff had asked me to help by offering her a Reiki treatment. She said she was willing to try anything to stop the pain. She was 40 years old and had been diagnosed with breast cancer that had metastasized to her spine and pelvis.

I began doing Reiki on her lower abdomen and hip and after some time I was aware that she had relaxed. Instead of a fetal position, she was stretched out on her back. She asked me how this could happen—how could the pain be almost gone? She began crying from relief. Her mother and boyfriend were also crying.

While the relief that patients experience is not always this dramatic, I have seen individuals find great physical relief in Reiki. In the 13 years I have worked with energy therapy, I have witnessed reduction in severe pain as well as the milder discomfort of headaches, toothaches and muscle aches. Patients also consistently report reduction and/or elimination of anxiety, profound relaxation and an increased sense of well-being. Cancer patients and others with serious illnesses especially benefit from Reiki. The energy therapy often relieves nausea, a common side effect of chemotherapy treatment.

Last year, I began using a modified Pain and Anxiety Inventory, a method that allows patients to indi-



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*Cancer patients have found that Reiki treatments help them experience an inner peace that eases the pain they experience while opening a new relationship with God, friends and family.*

cate their pain and anxiety levels on a 0-10 scale before and after treatment. Although, only a first step in attempting to quantify the effects of Reiki treatments, the results have been promising. Of the patients who reported pain, 95 percent experienced relief at some level, with 46 percent of that group reporting elimination of symptoms. Of the patients who felt anxiety, 98 percent experienced relief from their symptoms, with 48 percent of that group reporting elimination of symptoms.

So what is Reiki all about?

Reiki (pronounced ray-key) is a

Japanese form of hands-on therapy that rebalances the energy field within and around the body. The word Reiki comes from two Japanese words: rei, meaning universal or spiritual consciousness, and ki, meaning life force energy—the non-physical energy that animates all living things. When you become ill, the energy that naturally flows through your body becomes blocked or out of balance. Reiki restores the flow.

Although the “laying on of hands” has existed for thousands of years, the form called Reiki was discovered in the early 1900s by Dr. Mikao Usui,

a scholar and businessman. William Lee Rand, director of the International Center for Reiki Training in Southfield, Mich., writes that Usui’s journey began in 1914. That year Usui experienced some failures in his life and enrolled in a 21-day spiritual training course that probably included fasting, meditation, chanting and prayers.

Sometime during those 21 days, he discovered the energy of Reiki. By the 1920s, he had become well known throughout Japan for his teaching and healing. Eventually, Hawayo Takata, from Hawaii, who studied with one of Usui’s students, spread the study of Reiki to the U.S. mainland and other parts of the world.

During a Reiki session, the patient relaxes fully clothed on a therapy table while the practitioner gently places his or her hands on the body to direct energy. A full Reiki treatment may include 26 different hand positions and take about an hour.

Jerry Polomsky, who was diagnosed two-and-a-half years ago with stage IV prostate cancer, said Reiki has changed his outlook on life.

“I feel comfort with Reiki, and it spiritually fulfills a need for me,” he said. Polomsky has been receiving regular Reiki treatments for about two years.

“I’m a practicing Catholic and I can see no conflict between my religion and what I experience during Reiki. When we pray, we pray to a God we can’t see, yet we feel a oneness with Him. When I’m on the

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# Reiki is a gift from God to aid anyone suffering serious pain

I am writing in reference to Wendy Langenderfer's article on Reiki. (UB, June 3) I can't tell you how grateful I am to read this information. I have been a Reiki master for seven years and have had to deal with the misconceptions and misunderstandings of this wonderful healing modality.

I have been a practicing Catholic my entire life. I had a Catholic education and even took my Reiki training at the Ursuline Sophia Center in Pepper Pike. I began using this gentle yet powerful method after having been seriously injured in a motor vehicle accident 11 years ago. For two years after the accident I was homebound and in constant pain. Conventional medical therapies did nothing to help me, and in many cases made matters worse.

I heard about Reiki and after two sessions felt so much better. I decided to learn how to do this myself so I could help heal not only my own ailments, but friends and family as well. Little did I know the profound effect this decision would have on my life. I spent several years as a pastoral care volunteer at vari-

ous hospitals, offering prayer and Reiki and bringing the Eucharist to patients.

At the same time I began a healing practice in my home. I am also a labor and birth doula and work with hospice patients, using Reiki and other complementary healing methods. Many things have changed over the years since I began my practice, but occasionally I do still encounter the question, "Is it a sin?" Or, "I would like to try it but I am afraid it is evil!" How can this God-given energy be evil? When people thank me for their "healing," I tell them, "I am only the witness. God is the healer."

All of us have this ability to be instruments of God's healing. It is our choice. Reiki is not a religion. It can be done by and for anyone of any background. I just happen to be Catholic. I will continue to use Reiki in my practice because it works. Unlike conventional doctors who used to be able to say "First do no harm" but now know that the pharmaceuticals they prescribe, along with surgical errors, do indeed, cause harm, I can say with a clear conscience

that with this gentle, loving energy which comes from God I do not cause harm to anyone who comes to me for help.

Thank you, Ms. Langenderfer for a job well done. I will save her article to show to anyone who may question the safety and efficacy of Reiki, especially those who fear it may be sinful. It is anything but! Jesus said, "Miracles even greater than these, you will do." As our loving Father, He created us in a way that provides us with the ability to heal ourselves, through the laying on of hands. How blessed are we?

**Paula Baker  
Orwell**

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Reiki table, I find that same kind of peace inside."

"I really believe it's doing something good for the cancer," he said. "I was given two years (to live). That was nearly three years ago and I feel as good, if not better, today than when I was diagnosed."

"I feel relaxed when I walk away from my Reiki treatment. I can sleep at night. Could I have done it without Reiki? I doubt it. It's helped open up my eyes to a new relationship with God, my friends and my family."

Reiki can be a difficult concept for people to understand, especially in the medical community. But slowly, Reiki is gaining acceptance in medical settings as a cost-effective way to improve patient care.

The Ireland Cancer Center at Community Health Partners, Elyria; Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, New York; Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center, New York; The University of Michigan Hospital, Ann Arbor, and the Yale Cancer Center are just a few of the facilities that offer Reiki along with conven-

tional medicine. The National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine is currently sponsoring four clinical trials involving Reiki, one at The Cleveland Clinic Foundation.

Medical care is entering a new era, one that integrates not only the best in technical knowledge, but a growing understanding of how the body, mind and spirit work together in the healing process. Reiki is one of the therapies that can form a healing bridge between the two.

*Langenderfer, a former journalist, is a Reiki master who works at The Center for Body, Mind & Spirit at The Ireland Cancer Center at Community Health Partners, Elyria.*