

Center for Reiki Research Study Summary

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Harnessing Life Energy or Wishful Thinking? Reiki, Placebo Reiki, Meditation, and Music

Reference

Witte D., Dundes, L. Harnessing Life Energy or Wishful Thinking? Reiki, Placebo Reiki, Meditation, and Music. *Alternative and Complementary Therapies*, 7(5): 304-309, 2001

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to address deficiencies in existing Reiki research by objectively measuring the effect of Reiki on physical and mental relaxation.

Objective/goals/hypotheses

The hypothesis was that Reiki may induce physical relaxation more effectively than music, meditation or an un-attuned practitioner applying human touch.

Methods

The convenience sample of 100 undergraduate students, aged 18-22, was randomly assigned to 1 of 4 stations (A, B, C, D) that were identically set up and equipped. The four stations were representative of the relaxation methods: Reiki, placebo Reiki, music and meditation. The Reiki and placebo practitioners each held four hand positions for 5 minutes (totaling 20 minutes) and these positions were specifically orchestrated to prevent influential differences in technique. Blood pressure and heart rate were measured pre and post experiment. To standardize the experience, no talking was allowed.

Results

At pre-test assessment, few students (13%) were very physically stressed; more however, were mentally stressed (25%). At post-test comparison, the Reiki group was much more physically relaxed. However, there was almost no difference in the effect of Reiki on mental relaxation compared to the other therapies.

Strengths

The analysis of the data was not only objective, but also professionally thoughtful and insightful. This study can be replicated; the design is clear and well laid out.

Weaknesses

No clear consideration was given to the fact that there was no practitioner present during the music and meditation experiences, and how this affected the outcome of those groups. Since at pre-test, few students (13%) reported being very stressed, it would have been helpful to the overall outcome for the examiners to include the variable of possible medically induced relaxation when measuring and analyzing the data. Only level 1 Reiki practitioners were used in the study.

Additional comments

The overall impression of this study is: investigators followed a consistent level of objectivity enhanced by a succinct, well laid-out study. The use of photos and well-defined charts make this a reader friendly study.

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