

# Therapeutic Touch Under Attack by the AMA

Therapeutic Touch is a treatment approach based on the principle that a trained practitioner, using his or her hands, is able to alter a patient's energy field to help restore wellness. The concept of energy fields is not new to us. In India, an ancient healing method known as Ayurvedic uses the term prana to describe the concept of life force. The Chinese use the term Qi (Chi) to describe energy movement in the body and apply the use of acupuncture, herbs, Qi Gong, etc. to influence these fields. In the United States, during the late 1800's, a similar technique was practiced known as Magnetic Healing where the practitioner placed their hands on or near a patient to influence healing properties. Many of the early chiropractors, including its founder D.D. Palmer, used energy field based healing on their patients.

Over the years, Therapeutic Touch has gained recognition in the United States health care system. It is used by at least 43,000 health care professionals, taught in more than 100 colleges and universities in 75 countries, and applied by nurses in over 80 hospitals in North America, often without the permission or knowledge of the attending physician.

Therapeutic Touch has been promoted by the Order of Nurses of Quebec, the National League for Nursing and through workshops held by the American Nurses' Association. Numerous studies have been conducted which demonstrate its benefit for a variety of conditions to include reducing burn victim recovery time and increasing lactation in breast-feeding mothers, among others.

The Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) published an article on April 1, 1998 by several authors to include Stephen Barrett, M.D., a self-proclaimed quack watcher. The paper, "A Close Look at Therapeutic Touch" examined the ability of a trained Therapeutic Touch practitioner to detect the presence of a human energy field. This was performed by placing a barrier between the practitioner and the investigator -- a 9 year old. The Therapeutic Touch practitioners were asked to identify which of their hands was closest to the investigator's hand. The study concluded that the 21 Therapeutic Touch practitioners were unable to detect the investigator's "energy field".

These results are not surprising given the flawed methodology. Do you ask a wine taster to detect a delicate bouquet by having another person drink it? The JAMA study is reversed. The investigators should have been given a blindfold and then asked if they could detect any difference in sensation while being touched by a trained Therapeutic Touch practitioner versus a non-trained individual. This would be a more appropriate study.

The value and benefit of physical touch is as old as recorded history. There are not many living beings who have not felt comfort from the touch of a loved one, family member, friend, four-legged companion and yes, even a healer. Without touch, children have been shown to suffer physical and developmental consequences. Without touch, the human species would be hampered in its ability to communicate, love, show compassion, understanding, comfort and healing. It seems ironic that the AMA is publishing a Journal of "Alternative" Medicine when it has had a long history of trying to eliminate all non-M.D. health care professions. Is this journal

a true science-based journal seeking truth or simply another way to influence JAMA readers with a prejudicial view and biased articles? As other forms of healing become part of the American consciousness, look for similar negating studies to come from the AMA. Recently, Vitamin C and its benefits have been questioned, will mom's chicken soup be next. Stay tuned.