

DISTANT HEALING

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The Buddha compared the universe to a vast net woven of a countless variety of brilliant jewels, each with a countless number of facets. Each jewel reflects in itself every other jewel in the net and is, in fact, one with every other jewel. . . .”

—Sogyal Rinpoche¹

Mind by its very nature is a singulare tantum . . . the overall number of minds is just one.”

—Nobel physicist Erwin Schrödinger²

Distant healing may be defined as efforts in which one person attempts to influence the well being of another from a distance that places them beyond the reach of any sensory or bioenergetic contact. It is predicated on the notion that there exists an unseen dimension of reality in which time, space and separateness do not exist. In this deeper reality, in the words of physicist Nicolas Herbert, there is “an invisible quantum connection whose ubiquitous influence is unmediated, unmitigated, and immediate.”³

Distant healing is best understood in light of the growing insights into the phenomena of human connectedness. Larry Dossey has helped bring this subject into the foreground of medicine and healing through his concept of the three eras of medicine. In short, Era I Medicine comprises the purely biophysiological approaches, Era II Medicine incorporates the role of consciousness via the mind/body connection, and Era III Medicine embraces the reality of distant or non-local effects in healing. Era III Medicine includes healing through intercessory prayer and other approaches that recognize the transcendent dimension of reality where the boundaries of locality, distance and time do not apply, and across which human beings can influence one another by projecting their will or intention.

While recent years have seen a steady increase in the number of studies exploring the phenomena of distant healing, the results have been somewhat ambiguous. A recent review of randomized controlled trials evaluated 23 trials involving 2774 patients.⁴ Thirteen of the studies (57%) showed statistically significant results, though we can only speculate about the exact mechanisms. There are also well-designed studies that have found no significant effects. Thus we are left with the conclusion that distant healing *can* have meaningful effects, but the optimal methods and research designs for studying them need a great deal more refinement.

In this issue of *Subtle Energies & Energy Medicine* we present five articles which contribute to the state of knowledge in this field. In the first paper Harald Walach presents a brilliantly conceived challenge to some of our assumptions and beliefs about how distant healing might occur. Walach is no stranger to distant healing research, having recently collaborated in a novel study of the health effects of being prayed for and *knowing* it. That study showed that chronically ill patients who *knew* they were in the treatment group showed highly significant improvement in quality of life compared to the wait-list controls.⁵ That finding is important because, rather than attempting to rule out placebo effects, it suggests implications for conscious partnership between healer and recipient.

In the present paper, *Theory and Apory in Healing Research: "Influence" Versus "Correlational" Models*, he looks more deeply at the healing partnership by questioning whether distant healing involves a cause and effect relationship following a linear sequence of time. He proposes that a more plausible explanation might be that distant healing is a correlations process. Based on principles drawn from quantum mechanics, healing may occur because the healer and the helee essentially achieve a state of entanglement on a quantum level in which they merge together as one being, and there is no sending or receiving of healing or energy or anything else.

Dean Radin, Fatima Regina Machado and Wellington Zangari in their paper, *Effects of Distant Healing Intention Through Time & Space*, offer two controlled studies. The first involves a tightly designed study examining real-time effects of healing intention on physiological parameters in a distant person. The second takes us into the realm of retro-causation, in which the association between distant healing intention and physiological changes in a "target" person

that had been monitored two months before the intervention are examined. The authors demonstrate that healing intention *appears* to be capable of transcending both space and time. Yet, the data are not the only highlights of this paper. The authors provide a thoughtful—and humbling—exploration of no less than five alternative interpretations of the findings, leaving us with a healthy respect for the limits of our knowledge, and the paradoxes and conundrums that characterize research in this area.

In *EEG Alterations During Absent “Healing,”* Norm Shealy, Timothy Smith, Saul Liss and Vera Borgmeyer offer evidence of the effects that five self-avowed healers had on the brain waves of 100 healthy subjects who were at distances ranging from 100 feet to 160 miles. The results suggest not only influence on brain wave activity, but also the possibility that healers can intentionally influence certain regions of the brain at will.

In the next paper, *Distant Healing*, Daniel Benor offers a thorough review of 61 of the seminal studies from the field of distant healing research. He reviews evidence of distant influence experiments across the full spectrum of target systems from DNA to single cell organisms, plants, animals, human physiological systems, and finally human illness. Benor makes important observations on the methodological limitations of many studies while at the same time helping us to appreciate the increasingly porous boundaries between science and spirituality.

Throughout the field of distant healing, *intentionality* or conscious will, is commonly regarded as a key to the process. All traditions that each distant healing focus significant attention on cultivating intentionality in the potential healer. In the final paper, *Exploring Robust Interactions Between Human Intention and Inanimate/Animate Systems*, William Tiller, Walter Dibble and Michael Kohane turn our previous conceptions of what intentionality is on their heads. They explore the possibility that intentionality not only may influence inanimate objects at a distance, but it may also be captured and contained in a physical device—an Intention Imprinted Electronic Device—and therefore exist and exert influence independently of human involvement. Can rooms, buildings, and objects become invested with intentionality and retain it over time? The authors open new doors into the mysteries of this elusive element of healing.

Finally, the cover of this issue, *Field of Souls*, by Michelle M. Nicolai, depicts the paradox of the double life that we all lead—and individuated selves embedded within the greater field of unity in which we are all one.

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REFERENCES & NOTES

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3. N. Herbert, *Quantum Reality* (Anchor Books, New York, NY, 1985), p. 249.
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