

Extended Abstract

THE EFFECT OF REIKI ON THE LEVEL OF FREE RADICALS

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High levels of Free Radicals in the human body have been shown to correlate with disease and aging. The intention of the researchers was to show that changes in levels of Free Radicals could be facilitated by Reiki intervention. Reiki is an ancient energy healing modality closely related in method to Therapeutic Touch. Sixty-seven subjects were recruited. Thirty-four volunteer subjects served as the intervention group. Thirty-three volunteer subjects served as the control group. All subjects were given a pre-intervention OxiData™ Urine Test, used to test the amount of free radical activity within the body by measuring free radicals excreted in urine, and filled out State Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) questionnaires, a self-reporting measure used to monitor anxiety level. The intervention group subjects were given three Reiki interventions of one-half hour each, by Master Level Reiki practitioners, on alternating days of the same week. The control group was asked to schedule a follow-up appointment for four days after the initial testing was done. All subjects of both groups were again administered an OxiData™ Urine Test and STAI questionnaires. Statistics were compiled and the pre- and post-intervention measurements compared. The differences in the two OxiData™ urine tests showed a post-intervention reduction of an average of one color change representing a drop of approximately twenty percent, with statistical significance at a level of .0001. The measurements of the pre- and post-intervention STAI questionnaires also showed high statistical significance, with an overall drop in State Anxiety of over seven points representing an approximate drop of twelve percent.

The introductory chapter introduces ideas surrounding the topic of Complementary and Alternative Medicine and its struggle for acceptance in the United States and discusses some reasons why Reiki was chosen as a healing modality for the research discussed in this dissertation. Within are examples of why free radicals are considered impairment to health, why it would be advantageous to find simple methods to reduce them, and how scientists today are finding mind-body-spirit methods effective and reasonable to use in contemporary health care. This chapter also describes reasons why the OxiData™ Urine test was used as a measurement and how scientists are discovering supportive data. The goals of the study are discussed and the hypotheses are presented.

Interest in Complementary and Alternative forms of health care has increased in the United States in recent years. What we call Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) in the contemporary United States functions as primary care for much of the world. Many traditional forms of healing are in use today and can expand our therapeutic options. We are beginning to develop logical explanations and testable hypotheses for energetic healing modalities. Many studies are being undertaken to show the usefulness of Reiki and similar CAM therapies: Therapeutic Touch, Touch for Health, Polarity Therapy, and Healing Touch, to name a few. Some have become established practices in nursing schools and hospitals. All of these methods are considered energy therapies. Energy therapies utilize the magnetic fields that surround and interpenetrate the human body. These fields are referred to as biomagnetic fields.

This study uses tools of modern medical science to attempt to understand whether Reiki, an ancient Spiritual Healing practice, can show concrete, tangible effects on physical and mental health and well-being. Resistance to CAM therapies as methods of healing exists. Much of the resistance has come from the belief that they are not supported by scientific data. Contemporary researchers are developing a significant body of scientific data that is leading to acceptance and use of CAM therapies in mainstream allopathic medicine, clinics, and hospitals.

In this research, the aspiration was to provide evidence of Reiki's effectiveness and increase its scientific acceptance. Within, we define Reiki; describe how it is applied, and some of the effects of, as well as benefits received from its application. We seek to discover what changes may occur in free radical levels by the application of Reiki, and to observe changes in anxiety levels as a result of using Reiki.

A variety of degenerative diseases have been linked to free radical activity. "These diseases begin with biochemical processes in the body, during which free radicals can damage cells and tissues. . . . Our bodies must continually strive to balance the events taking place in the molecules of our bodies. . . . The body's built-in mechanisms for handling free radicals consist of antioxidants, enzymes, and nutrients that remove radicals before they can cause cellular damage." The toxic levels of our environment (air pollution, water contamination, and emotional stressors) impose such high levels of stress on the human body that it is imperative to find ways to assist our bodies in reducing free radicals and their deleterious effects. This research focuses on Reiki as a means to assist natural, built-in mechanisms in reducing free radicals.

The Review of Literature chapter begins with a discussion of a variety of healing disciplines. It presents some of the history of Hands-on Healing and the story of how Reiki was rediscovered by Usui. A definition of Reiki, its uses, designations of training and principals by which Reiki practitioners are expected to live are discussed. An

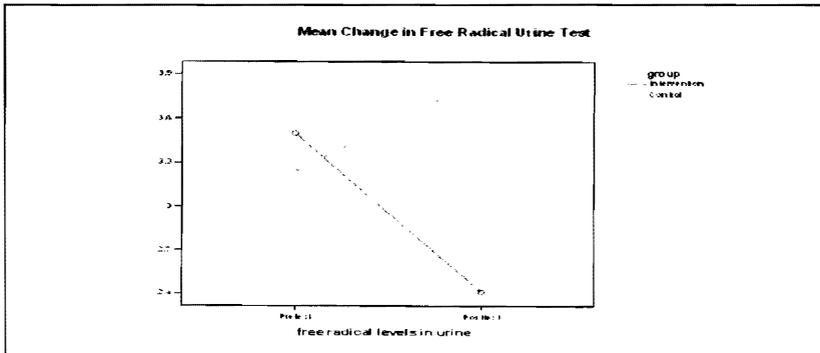


Figure 1. Pre- and post-test free radical levels for control and intervention groups.

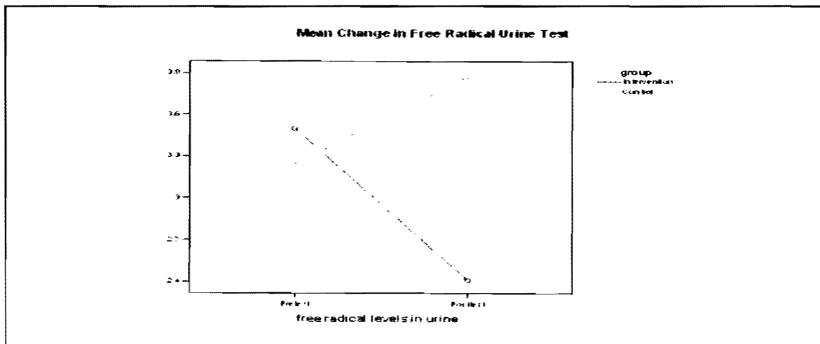


Figure 2. Changes in state-trait anxiety inventory scores—state.

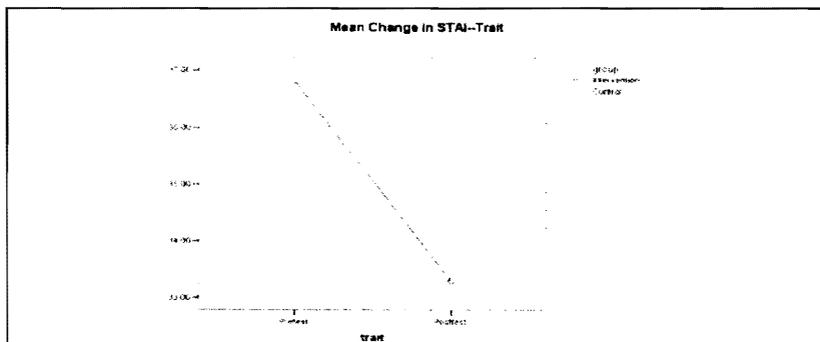


Figure 3. Changes in state-trait anxiety inventory scores—trait.

explanation of levels of Reiki training describes what each level of training requires and what abilities result from that training. Lineage is considered important in many Reiki communities as lineage diagrams the practitioners' connection to the original teachings of Usui. Attunements, also called initiations, are an important part of this ancient healing tradition. Through these attunements students develop the ability to pass Reiki on to their clients. Symbolism is an integral part of practicing Reiki in second and third degree levels. Symbols are identified and discussed as to their importance and uses. Also in the Review of Literature chapter, research studies of the effects of Reiki and other energy healing methods demonstrate validity and effectiveness. Free radicals are defined and their causes and functions discussed. Damages caused by, and methods of measuring free radicals are included, followed by a discussion of the Oxidata™ test used for this study. Through use of the State Trait Anxiety Inventory investigators demonstrate mental and emotional benefits of Reiki.

In order to answer the research questions, two mixed Analyses of Variance (also known as split-plot ANOVAs) were conducted, with one between groups' factor (i.e., control or intervention group) and one within groups factor (i.e., repeated measures of either urine testing for free radicals or STAI for anxiety). This analysis allows us to determine whether there were differences between the control and intervention groups across the pretest and posttest scores by focusing on the interaction effect (i.e., the F-ratio for the interaction between group and repeated measures).

Figure 1 shows movement in free radical levels in the intervention and control groups. The movement in the intervention group is just over one point based upon the chart given in the Oxidata™ kit. This represents a positive change of approximately twenty percent, and can be expected to have positive health implications if the changes can be maintained.

Figure 2 shows a decrease of approximately seven points in the intervention group mean State anxiety scores following Reiki treatments and compares the pre- and posttest results of the state segment of the STAI. This figure represents a decrease in State anxiety scores for the intervention group. State anxiety scores represent more variable distinguishing characteristics than do Trait anxiety scores. The increase in the control group scores of less than 1 point on State anxiety scores suggests that an increase could have been expected instead of the decrease noted in intervention scores.

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