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Complementary Health Care: The use of Therapeutic Touch in Nursing care

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ABSTRACT

Therapeutic Touch is an intentional care aimed at achieving better health outcome. It is affirmed that therapeutic touch makes patient feel belonged and valued, removes tension, and relaxes patient. This paper presentation was written to discuss the use of therapeutic touch in complementary Healthcare practise. Specifically, the aim was to understand the concept of complementary Healthcare and Therapeutic Touch (TT) and to explore how it improves patient wellbeing, It was affirmed that complementary Healthcare are group of medical and health care systems, practices, and products that are part of conventional medicine aimed at improving the health and quality of life as well as increased longevity by using natural approaches and different methods of alternative medicine based on clinical and research experiences. Therapeutic touch is a non-invasive intervention for improving the health status in patients. This paper reveals the benefits of therapeutic touch in Nursing Practice which includes Pain Management, Stress Reduction, Anxiety and Depression, Improve Healing, Creating a Healing Environment and Practitioner Self-Care. Based on the relevance of therapeutic touch on patients' wellbeing, it is recommended that nurses implore this unique therapy in the care of patient to achieve recovery as early as possible and continuing education for nurses in both public and private health facilities should include complementary healthcare and therapeutic touch thereby equipping nurses with pool of knowledge on the use of complementary therapies to improve patient quality care.

Keywords: *Complementary health Care, therapeutic touch (TT), nursing practice*

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INTRODUCTION

Therapeutic touch is an age long practice; Therapeutic Touch (TT) was developed by Dora Kunz, a natural healer, and Delores Krieger, a nurse and professor of nursing, in the early 1970s. They formalized this energy-based healing technique, which involves practitioners using their hands to assess and balance the energy field surrounding the body. Therapeutic Touch gained popularity, especially in nursing and holistic health practices, as a complementary therapy for promoting

relaxation and well-being. It is a practice used in conjunction with conventional medicine to promote overall well-being of patients/client. It is a complementary therapy that involves the practitioner using their hands to promote healing and relaxation (Sadeghi, Heidarnia, Zaghari, Rassouli, & Soori, 2020).

In the holy bible, the book of Act 8:14-15 state, "and when Jesus was come into peters house, he saw his wife's mother laid and sick of fever. And he touched her

hand, and the fever left her, and she rose and ministered unto him” from the above story it is proven that therapeutic touch has been in practice for long, there was a relief after the touch of Jesus. Even though it was recorded that Jesus worked miracles according to documented evidence. It is possible to have spoken to the woman alone without touching her. The sense of touch strengthened her, and she rose up immediately the fever left her because a positive energy was created around her. It is possible to administer medication to a sick individual and yet the sick person despite medication remains on bed lying without making effort to move out of bed.

As a participant observer to female medical ward; I met a woman who had spent 5days without improvement, she was on oxygen, I went through her case note, view all the investigation done and they were all normal including her ECG result, Her hair was unkempt, had long finger and toe, I decided to go close, sat by her bedside and touched her hand, then proceeded by demanding for a blade to trim the finger and toe nails, then attended to the unkempt hair by combing and plaiting the hair, held her hands, rub gently and suddenly she spoke and said thank you. She ventilated her mind and told me her fears and all that she has been going through since she was 13years old. Each time I visited her, I intentionally sat by her bedside and hold her hand, shared some intuitive thought with her, reminded her of her braveness as a young girl according to the history she gave to me and at a point added some humorous words that made her smile for the first time since admission of which her daughter was surprise to see her mother smiling and talking. She was encouraged to do some passive exercise and assisted her in doing the exercise. To my amazement after the 4th visit, she was reviewed by medical team in charge and oxygen was discontinued and she was discharged home.

This has been my experience with most critically ill patient including the unconscious patient I had opportunity to nurse. I remember talking with unconscious patient and tell them words into their ears, pray each day I come to their bed side and encourage them to fight back and most times it works. The atmosphere created around the sick person is crucial to the sick person improvement and recovery.

Nursing is a noble profession dedicated to promoting health, alleviating suffering and providing compassionate care to those in need. While modern medicine has made tremendous advancements, there is a growing recognition of the importance of holistic nursing care that addresses not only the physical aspects of healing but also the emotional, mental, and spiritual well-being of patients. One approach that embodies this holistic philosophy is therapeutic touch. We will explore the concept of therapeutic touch in nursing, its history, principles, benefits, and how it empowers nurses to

create healing connections with their patients. Therapeutic touch is an ancient healing practice that involves using the hands to promote healing and well-being. It is based on the belief that the human body has an energy field that can be influenced by the intention and touch of a trained practitioner. This approach is grounded in the idea that illness or imbalance disrupts the flow of energy in the body, and therapeutic touch seeks to restore harmony and balance.

Therapeutic touch improves patient wellbeing; this work focuses on exploring the benefits of incorporating therapeutic touch in nursing care so as to enhance patient wellbeing. It involves investigating how these elements contribute to overall well-being,. Practitioners of therapeutic touch say they sense your energy through their hands and then send healthy energy back to you. When receiving therapeutic touch, people usually feel warmth, relaxation, and pain relief. The practitioner describes your energy as hot or cold, active, or passive, blocked, or free (Jackson, Kelley, McNeil, Meyer, Schlegel & Eaton, 2018).

OBJECTIVES

The objective of this paper paper is to discuss the use of therapeutic touch in complementary Healthcare practice. The specific objectives are:

1. To understand the concept of complementary Healthcare and Therapeutic Touch (TT).
2. To explore how therapeutic touch improves patient wellbeing.
3. To discuss empirical studies in therapeutic care on patient wellbeing.

LITERATURE REVIEW

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Concept of Complementary Healthcare

Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) is a group of medical and health care systems, practices, and products that are not currently considered to be part of conventional medicine. The aim of this approach is to improve the health and quality of life as well as increased longevity by using natural approaches and different methods of alternative medicine based on clinical and research experiences. In a similar vein, the studies around the world indicate an increasing desire to control health through using CAM (Sadeghi et al., 2020). Complementary health care describes types of treatments one may receive along with traditional western medicine, it includes massage, meditation, biofeedback, tai chi, therapeutic touch, music therapy, guided imagery, and dietary supplements. It includes lifestyle approaches,

dietary supplements, and mind-body techniques. It focuses on overall health and wellbeing. Sometimes it is used interchangeably with complementary medicine. They are additional methods that are used along with traditional approaches, medications, immunotherapy, chemotherapy, radiation, and surgery. It complements these traditional medical approaches (National Institutes of Health, 2021). Each type of complementary medicine may target a specific aspect of health, it can provide one or more of these health's benefit; relieves pain, reduces anxiety and stress. Reduces nausea, improves mood, increases relaxation, improves wound healing, and encourages feelings of wellbeing, pleasure positivity and inner peace. Relieves muscle tension, decreases tiredness, and improves flexibility and circulation (Alp & Yucel, 2020).

Types of complementary therapies

Manipulation and body-based practices

Massage

Massage therapy utilizes the body's nerve endings and pressure points to induce relaxation and alleviate tension. Various forms of massage, such as shiatsu, hellerwork, and reflexology, offer different techniques to address specific needs and promote overall well-being. Whether it's for stress relief, muscle recovery, or simply to unwind, there is a massage technique suited for everyone. However, the most widespread variation builds upon the five basic strokes of Swedish massage; effleurage (slow rhythmic gliding strokes in direction of blood flow towards the heart), presage (kneading, pressing and rolling muscle groups), friction steady pressure or tight circular movements, often used around joints. Percussion (drumming hands on body) and vibration (rapid movement shaking the muscle back and forth) (Merck Manual Consumer Version, 2021). Massage therapy has been used to reduce stress and anxiety, improve mood. aid in relaxation and control pain. Foot massage has been shown to have a positive effect on pain, nausea, and relaxation.

Reflexology

This therapy involves applying manual pressure to areas of the foot, hand or ear that are believed to correspond to the affected organs or body systems, reflexology may help to relief symptoms such as pain, constipation, and nausea (Bagci & Yucel, 2020).

Chiropractic or osteopathic manipulation

This is a hands-on approach that focuses on the spine and other joints of the body and their connection to the nervous system. These approaches involve moving your

muscles and joints using stretching, gentle pressure, and resistance. They can help ease muscle pain and improve your overall mobility and function. This approach can help reduce the severity of various symptoms, including migraines, menstrual pain, and carpal tunnel syndrome (National Institutes of Health, 2021).

Cupping

This is a type of massage therapy that involves using heated cups to create a vacuum on your skin. It increases blood flow to targeted areas to reduce inflammation.

Mind-body techniques

Meditation

Meditation is a method of relaxing and quieting your mind to relieve muscle tension and achieve inner peace. There are numerous forms of meditation, taught individually or in group settings.

Relaxation and deep breathing

Relaxation and breathing techniques help to release muscle tension, relieve breathlessness, lessen anxiety, and encourage a greater sense of control, particularly when receiving unpleasant or stressful treatments (Desai et al., 2018).

Yoga

Yoga is a form of gentle exercise consisting of body postures and breathing techniques. It has been practiced for thousands of years in India and is now popular around the world. In the West, yoga is valued more for its physical than spiritual benefits, such as its ability to increase suppleness and vitality and to relieve stress and fatigue (Carpenito-Moyet, 2019).

Landscape therapy

Landscape therapy is the showing of peaceful, relaxing landscapes that can evoke calmness and tranquillity. Landscapes may be shown in a darkened room via a slide show or video screen, or they may be shown in the form of art books or actual artwork. Landscape therapy is often used as a distraction technique to help manage pain and anxiety (Aghabati, Mohammadi, & Pour Esmail, 2019).

Music therapy

Music therapy is an expressive art form designed to help individuals achieve harmony and balance. Music therapy can include both listening to and/or playing music.

Music Therapists are professionals who are educated to design music programs for patients. Through music, you explore emotional, spiritual, and behavioural issues. Music therapy can help release emotions and promote relaxation. Listening to music can be either calming or invigorating (Desai et al., 2018).

Animal-assisted therapy

A therapist will team up with dogs or other animals to help you better cope with your health issues including mental health disorders, cancer, and heart disease. Animal-assisted therapy can reduce pain and anxiety, depression and fatigue associated with many health problems.

Biofeedback

This is a training technique through which you learn to control your thoughts, emotions, or behaviour. Your therapist will measure your body's functions (for example, EEG to measure brain waves, ECG to measure heart rate, EMG to measure muscle contractions) throughout therapy, and you'll see changes in these measurements as you learn new coping strategies.

Guided imagery or visualization

With this therapy, a practitioner helps you create positive mental images and desired outcomes for specific situations. For example, while in a state of relaxation, you might focus on feeling stronger or better, or you might picture the destruction of tumour cells. In another technique, you may visualize various aspects of treatment, from the least frightening to the most painful, remaining calm and relaxed at each step (Desai et al., 2018).

Hypnotherapy

Hypnotherapy is like guided imagery, but a physician or licensed hypnotherapist induces deep relaxation.

Prayer therapy

This approach uses prayer therapeutically for mental and emotional healing. Prayer can be used as a tool for exploring your heart's/soul's past, present or future distress and stress. This can help you to better understand yourself and to explore and release feelings. Your prayer is personal — the therapist merely acts as a facilitator.

Energy force therapies

Tai Chi

Tai Chi is a non-combative martial art that uses breathing techniques and sequences of slow, graceful movements to improve the flow of "life energy," to calm the mind and promote self-healing. It is often described as "meditation in motion." It is practiced more as a form of preventive health care than as a response to an ailment.

Qi gong

Qi gong is an ancient system of movement, breathing techniques and meditation. It's designed to develop and improve the circulation of qi, or "life energy," around your body.

Therapeutic touch

With therapeutic touch, a practitioner attunes their energy field with yours so that disturbances in "energy flow" are balanced and your body's healing powers can work freely. The practitioner's hands are placed inches above your body and gently pass over it to assess any changes or blockages in the energy field. Healing energy is directed from the practitioner's body to yours. Touch therapy is used to treat stress-related conditions such as fatigue and headaches as well as pain relief, especially from muscle strain and following surgery. It also has been used to promote wound healing, and for lymphatic and circulation disorders.

Reiki

Reiki is a form of Japanese spiritual healing that has its roots in ancient Tibetan Buddhism. Reiki aims to promote health, maintain well-being, and help you attain a higher level of consciousness. Practitioners direct "reiki energy" through their hands (holding them over your clothed body), channeling energy to areas of need in you. Reiki claims to balance the body's energy centres or "chakras" and dissolve energy blockages that lead to disharmony and disease. Some people may feel relaxed after treatment; others feel invigorated (Jackson et al., 2018).

Acupuncture

Acupuncture is an ancient Chinese system of healthcare. It aims to prevent and cure specific diseases and conditions by sticking very fine, solid needles into points of your body. Acupuncture is believed to encourage the release of endorphins — natural painkillers — which can also increase feelings of well-being. Acupressure, in which the same acupoints are stimulated by hand, may be effective in the same way, but to a lesser degree.

Magnets

This therapy involves placing magnets on your body to

reduce pain or enhance healing.

Expressive Therapies

Journal writing

Writing in a journal is an effective way to handle some of the emotions that living with a medical condition trigger. If you are facing a serious illness, it can be difficult to express your feelings to others. But with journal writing, you can express difficult feelings safely and privately. Regular journal writing may also help you clarify your thoughts and make good choices (Desai et al., 2018).

Art therapy

Drawing, painting, and sculpting, especially when carried out in a group environment, can help you express feelings that can't be easily put into words.

Support groups

In support groups, you could share your concerns, fears, and hopes with those who are experiencing similar life challenges. Support groups can help your family and friends too.

Other complementary approaches

Dietary supplements and herbal remedies

Dietary supplements include vitamins, minerals, herbs and enzymes. They are not regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for safety and effectiveness. Examples include glucosamine, chondroitin, St. John's Wort, ginkgo, saw palmetto, ginseng, fish oil, echinacea, vitamin D, garlic calcium and green tea.

Aromatherapy

Aromatherapy involves the exposure of patients to essential oils, which can be vaporized in a room or absorbed through the skin. The scents released by the oils are believed to have an impact on the hypothalamus, influencing hormones and potentially affecting mood, metabolism, stress levels, and sexual desire. Common essential oils used in aromatherapy include chamomile, lavender, peppermint, rosemary, eucalyptus, sandalwood, and tea tree. It is important to note that individual preferences and responses to different scents can vary greatly (Desai et al., 2018).

CONCEPT OF THERAPEUTIC TOUCH

Despite the use of the word "touch," the hands usually

hover over the body and do not physically touch it. Therapeutic touch is based on the theory that the body, mind, and emotions form a complex energy field (Figure 1). According to therapeutic touch, good health is an indication of a balanced energy field, while illness represents imbalance. Studies suggest that therapeutic touch may help heal wounds, reduce pain, and lessen anxiety (Carpenito-Moyet, 2019).



Figure 1: Therapeutic touch uses a practice called "laying on of hands" to correct or balance energy fields.

Principles of therapeutic touch

Intention and Presence: Therapeutic touch begins with the practitioner's intention to promote healing. The practitioner must be fully present, focused, and attuned to the patient's needs.

Non-Invasive: Therapeutic touch is a non-invasive technique that involves light touch or hand movements just above the body, without physical manipulation.

Energy Exchange: The practitioner seeks to influence the patient's energy field, promoting a positive energy exchange that facilitates healing.

Self-Care: Practitioners of therapeutic touch prioritize self-care, ensuring they are grounded, balanced, and emotionally centered before engaging in healing interactions.

Therapeutic Touch in Nursing Practice

In nursing, therapeutic touch is often integrated into the care of patients who are experiencing pain, anxiety, or emotional distress (Figure 2). It is used in various healthcare settings, including hospitals, hospices, and long-term care facilities. Therapeutic touch complements conventional medical treatments, offering a holistic approach to patient care (ASC, 2020).



Figure 2: Therapeutic touch in nursing practice

Benefits of Therapeutic Touch

Pain Management: Therapeutic touch has been shown to reduce pain perception and increase pain tolerance in patients. The calming effect of touch releases endorphins, the body's natural painkillers.

Stress Reduction: The gentle and nurturing touch of therapeutic touch can reduce stress and promote relaxation, leading to improved overall well-being.

Anxiety and Depression: Therapeutic touch helps alleviate symptoms of anxiety and depression by promoting a sense of calm and emotional balance.

Improved Healing: By restoring energy flow and balance in the body, therapeutic touch can support the body's natural healing processes.

Creating a Healing Environment: Establishing a healing environment is crucial for the success of therapeutic touch. Dim lighting, soft music, and a calm atmosphere can enhance the experience.

Practitioner Self-Care: Nurses practicing therapeutic touch must prioritize self-care, engaging in techniques like meditation or mindfulness to remain centered and emotionally grounded.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Scientists are not certain how therapeutic touch works; however, they have two theories:

One theory is that the pain associated with a physically or emotionally painful experience, such as infection, injury, or a difficult relationship, remains in the body's cells.

The pain stored in the cells is disruptive and prevents some cells from working properly with other cells in the body. This causes disease. Practitioners believe therapeutic touch promotes health by restoring communication between cells. Bessel Van der Kolk's "the body keeps the Score" (2014).

The other theory is based on the principles of quantum physics. As blood, which contains iron, circulates in our bodies, it produces an electromagnetic field. According to this theory, at one time we could all easily see this field, called an aura, but now only certain people, such as those who practice therapeutic touch, develop this ability (Oschman, 2015).

There are 8 general regions of the body where energy is sensed, the head, throat, heart, stomach, lower abdomen, sacral region, knees, and feet. Ultimately, the person who receives therapeutic touch is the healer. The practitioner simply allows your body's own healing mechanisms to come out (Krieger, 2020; Buchanan, (2022). The role of the practitioner is to help this process.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

In the realm of therapeutic care, empirical studies have shed light on the impact of various interventions on patient wellbeing. Weze et al. (2019), Cook, Guerrero & Slater (2019), Meehan (2018), and Rogers (2019) have contributed to this body of research, highlighting the positive effects of therapeutic touch on reducing pain in patients and improving their overall wellbeing. These findings underscore the potential of therapeutic touch as a valuable component of patient care, offering insights into its role in alleviating physical discomfort and enhancing the holistic health of individuals. Such evidence serves to inform and guide healthcare professionals in their efforts to optimize patient outcomes through the integration of therapeutic touch within clinical practice. Numerous studies have shown that a variety of complementary medicine can be influential in solving or reducing the problems caused by the diseases (DeVita, Lawrence, DeVita & Rosenberg's, 2019).

According to the American Cancer Society (2019), complementary medicine includes methods that lead to the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of infection and diseases. Some types of complementary therapies can help to relieve from some certain symptoms of cancer and side effects caused by the treatment, such as fatigue, anxiety, and pain, or lead to an increased sense of well-being in a person (Chhugani, 2020).

Rogers (2019) delves into the subject of "nursing: knowledge of human unity" by presenting a perspective that views individuals as continuous multi-dimensional energy fields. According to Rogers, these energy fields interact with the energy field of the environment, emphasizing the interconnectedness of human beings

with their surroundings. This holistic approach to understanding human existence highlights the significance of considering the dynamic interplay between individuals and their environment within the context of nursing practice. Rogers' work provides valuable insights for further exploration and understanding of the intricate relationship between human beings and their surrounding energy fields in the realm of healthcare and nursing. Touch therapists believe that humans are in energy fields and have open systems. Since the energy of therapists is not stopped in recipients, energy can be exchanged without any physical contact or with a very slight one (Meehan, 2018 ;). From the Rogers' perspective, TT is an example of how professionals work to strengthen the integrity and perfection of humans and their environmental fields so that patients can reach an optimal health status. TT is a non-invasive nursing intervention which takes place by the hands and in the form of energy transfer.

In Jackson et al. (2018) study, the authors investigated twelve research studies and found evidence supporting the use of Therapeutic Touch (TT) as a method for reducing physical and psychological symptoms in cancer patients. The study highlights the potential positive outcomes of TT in nursing and its significance in the care of cancer patients. Considering the increasing publication of articles in this field, the review study aims to comprehensively evaluate the results of TT clinical trials in patients with cancer. This indicates a growing interest in understanding the effectiveness of TT in managing symptoms and improving the well-being of individuals undergoing cancer treatment. Moreover, Cook, Guerrero and Slater, (2019 :) in the study reported the reduction in pain and improvement in the physical function. In this study, the intervention group had a greater improvement than the control group in terms of quality of life. Additionally, the improvement in physical function, pain and vitality was observed in the intervention group compared to the control group. The results of this study indicate that therapeutic touch can cause the pain reduction in the breast and oncology cancers.

Furthermore, the results of a study by Weze, Leathard, Grange, Tiplady and Stevens, (2019 :) indicated positive effects of therapeutic touch on reducing pain in patients. Post-white et al (2020) in their study investigated the effects of massage therapy (MT) and TT compared to the standard care on inducing relaxation and reducing symptoms in 203 patients. The results demonstrated a greater relaxed feeling and short-term pain reduction, along with less disturbed mood and fatigue in the patients in the intervention group with the touch and massage therapies compared to the patients in the control group. The researchers concluded that the use of various methods of alternative medicine to relieve pain in patients with chronic pain may be more beneficial than relying on a single approach (Dossey, Keegan, Barrere, & Blaszk

Helming, 2018). Coakley and Duffy, (2020) believes that the touch therapy can be used to improve various symptoms in patients with cancer. In a similar vein, studies have also shown that such holistic interferences are greatly demanded by the patients. The goal of TT is to restore balance, harmony, and a sense of well-being. TT is based on a compassionate intention directed through light touch or placement of the hands just off the body which is often performed by nurses. Various mechanisms have been proposed to enhance the TT (Clark & Mulligan, 2019).

IMPLICATION FOR NURSING PRACTICE

Nurses and midwives are in constant touch and constitute a greater proportion of health care personnel who render services to patients and other consumers of health care, so they should make implore this unique therapy in the care of patient to achieve recovery as early as possible. TT brings about better nurse-patient relationship (Krieger, 2020)). A nurse who gives therapeutic touch create an energy around a patient that restores balance and connectivity among the body cells, the aura of hope and reassurance can turn patient condition around thereby improving the patient wellbeing. The use of therapeutic touch relaxes patient thereby improved her wellbeing hence the need to explore more on this practice. The National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine places therapeutic touch (TT) into the category of bio field energy. There is still controversy; however, as to whether the healing power of therapy touch has anything to do with the "laying on of hands." Critics suggest that the healing observed after therapeutic touch may be the result of the relaxing nature of the therapy itself and not the energy transfer between the therapist's hands and the person's body. While there seem to be many potentials uses for therapeutic touch (Adams, 2022). As a result, much of the research has been criticized. Better studies may lead to wider acceptance.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, affirmation can be made regarding the use of therapeutic touch as a non-invasive intervention for improving the health status in patients with cancer. It also seems that this method can be used as a safe method in the management of physical function, pain, anxiety, and nausea in patients. Training TT to nurses and other health professionals can possibly be of great help in providing quality care for patients and reducing complications of the disease. However, further studies are needed to explore the impact of TT on additional clinically relevant measures.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (a) Nurses should implore therapy touch in the care of patient to achieve recovery as early as possible.
- (b) To stem this tide, continuing education for nurses in both public and private health facilities should include complementary healthcare and therapeutic touch thereby equipping nurses with pool of knowledge on the use of complementary therapies to improve patient quality care.

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