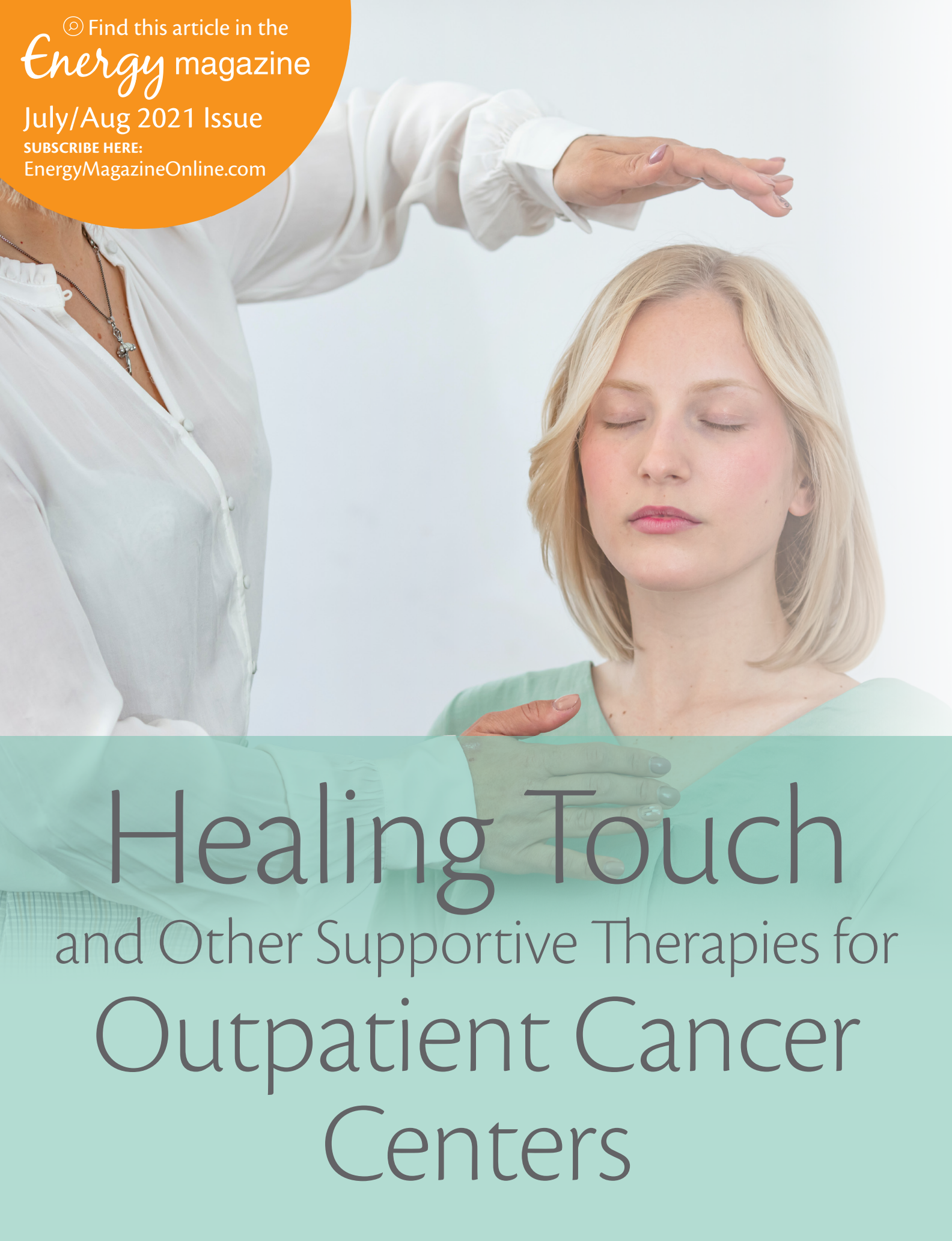


© Find this article in the
Energy magazine

July/Aug 2021 Issue

SUBSCRIBE HERE:

EnergyMagazineOnline.com



Healing Touch and Other Supportive Therapies for Outpatient Cancer Centers

It's not surprising that many cancer survivors turn to complementary therapies such as Healing Touch to help manage their symptoms and gain a sense of well-being and balance in their life.

Debra Reis

Many people with a cancer diagnosis and going through cancer treatment can experience side effects and adverse symptoms not only during treatment, but also well after treatment has concluded. Fatigue, sleep disturbances, pain, cognitive disturbance, and depression are all symptoms that can persist, even years after treatment.¹

It's not surprising that many cancer survivors turn to complementary therapies such as Healing Touch to help manage their symptoms and gain a sense of well-being and balance in their life.^{2,3} Many healthcare organizations are including holistic therapies as part of their offerings for patients. Often, these are added-on services, sometimes fee-based, and may not be integrated into department policies and management.

Recently, several national regulating agencies are promoting that health care organizations begin to incorporate non-pharmacological interventions for conditions like pain management, anxiety, and other health-related concerns. Healthcare organizations are searching for modalities that are evidence-based

and can meet these concerns. **Healing Touch** is one supportive therapy that has research and practical application in the clinical setting.⁴ Healing Touch is a gentle and relaxing energy balancing therapy where the practitioner may or may not use physical touch to balance the energy field.

Oncology centers are one area where supportive therapies have been embraced and incorporated into care planning.^{5,6} Our healthcare system is comprised of nine outpatient cancer centers across Northwest Ohio and Southeast Michigan and includes both urban and rural settings. Healing Care is our complementary care program offering supportive therapies to patients and families going through the cancer journey. Supportive therapies include **breathwork**, **guided imagery**, and **Healing Touch**. **Aromatherapy** and **gentle movement therapies** are also provided to patients and families. Services such as Healing Touch are even offered to our staff members. This was extremely beneficial during the pandemic when staff experienced greater stress and unknown concerns. The Healing Care Program is staffed by three RNs with two of them certified as Healing Touch Practitioners.

WHY HEALING TOUCH?

As we chose therapies for the Healing Care program, a modality needed to have structure and evidence of the benefits for patient care. The Healing Touch Program has a structure to each level completion along with parameters for certification. It's very clear as to what the participant will learn and be able to practice. In addition, this organization has Standards of Practice and a Code of Ethics for any practitioner of Healing Touch.

As a coordinator of the Healing Care Program, it's important to know what interventions a practitioner will be offering the patient/client. This type of supporting structure is not clear in other programs. It's crucial that we know what is being done and the standard being followed when using any supportive therapy in a clinical setting. If you are hiring or wish to obtain a Healing Touch Practitioner, ask for verification of their program completion or a copy of their certification. We have received many false claims of what people can provide or believe what they offer is comparable to Healing Touch.

Healing Touch sessions take place in a private area, comfortable surroundings, and typically last 30-40 minutes in length. The patient identifies their goal for the session. Often, patients look puzzled or question - "what is a goal?" In traditional healthcare, usually patients are told what to do and not asked how they wish to participate. This is a huge mind shift for those going through cancer treatment who often feel "out of control." Being an active part of a session reminds a person that they are in control of their well-being.

A Healing Touch session often includes other supportive therapies such as relaxation breathing, visualization, or guided imagery to help facilitate relaxation.

The most common Healing Touch techniques used are *Chakra Connection*, *Mind Clearing*, *Hands Moving*, *Hands Still*, and *Scudder*.

Currently, we provide about 40-50 sessions per

month. Healing Care services are offered to every patient going through treatment as part of their orientation. We receive referrals from healthcare providers, social workers, support staff, and patient/family self-referral. No physician order is necessary. Our services are included under nursing interventions for comfort and well-being.

HOW TO INCLUDE HEALING TOUCH IN YOUR DEPARTMENT

Healing Touch was started by providing information and sharing potential benefits with patients and health care staff. In the beginning, the best advocates for this service were the patients. They were open to anything that might be beneficial to helping them feel better. However, our overall total numbers were very low. The challenge was the healthcare staff. They did not understand what happened in the treatment room. They reviewed the brochures but did not understand how Healing Touch worked within patient care.

So, to foster a greater understanding of Healing Touch, education was provided to nurses and front desk staff. During the educational session, participants were provided with an overview of Healing Touch and the benefits to cancer patients. The session concluded with a hands-on practice where everyone had the opportunity to provide and receive a Healing Touch technique.

The outcome was phenomenal. It was awesome to see the outcomes of providing a healing, caring touch to a team member. During those short experiences, staff members were excited at their results and overall relaxation. After that education, referrals increased and the program's success has continued over 10 years later. Physicians began to hear results from patients and saw the benefits whenever we had to give emergent care to calm an anxious patient. As the team saw supportive therapies in action with positive outcomes, practitioners were being requested to assist or to provide tools to prevent an anxious situation or event.

Later, we were able to directly provide sessions to our

staff multiple times per month over the lunch period. These are confidential and last 20-25 minutes. When a staff member has a positive experience, they tell other team members and patients. They encourage others to experience a session for balance and well-being. These tools have been extremely beneficial to team members and patients during the pandemic where greater stress levels have been identified. Staff, patients, and families are taught how to use the different supportive therapies, including Healing Touch, for their self-care balance and renewal. One of the most frequently taught Healing Touch techniques is Hands Still over an area of concern. Prayer, affirmation, or visualization may be included as the person holds their hands over their specific area of concern. This provides people empowerment over their health and tools to help manage their situation.

HEALING TOUCH IN ACTION!


A patient was diagnosed with an aggressive type of breast cancer. She required planning for her treatment which included scans. As the therapist got her ready on the table, she became very anxious and said she “couldn’t do the treatment.” I was called in to help with relaxation and guiding her through. I listened to her and discovered that she was supposed to be on vacation in a beautiful, remote area, but COVID prevented her travel and now she was dealing with a diagnosis during her vacation time.


We spoke about the relaxation tools that may be helpful and she was very receptive. I began with Hands Still and my hand over her heart center as she closed her eyes. We did breathwork together and I provided lavender oil (her request) on a tissue for her to inhale as I guided her to her vacation spot. She relaxed and after about 10 minutes she was able to resume her treatment preparation. The intervention prevented treatment delays and rescheduling a vital procedure.

Another patient had practiced supportive therapies before her diagnosis of lung cancer. She was not familiar with Healing Touch but very agreeable to have a session. During her chemotherapy, she donned her headphones with her favorite chanting music.

Healing Touch was provided with chakra connection and mind-clearing to facilitate balance and comfort. Afterward, this patient stated she was deeply relaxed and continued to rest quietly. She continues to receive sessions from Healing Care as part of her care plan.

Our program also supports cancer patients’ caregivers. One of our Caregivers was working with her husband who had cancer of the brain. He had received Healing Touch for comfort during his radiation therapy. After treatment, his needs were greater than what our Caregiver could provide, and she placed him in an extended care facility. She was dealing with grief and loss. She was open to Healing Touch which was integrated with aromatherapy and guided imagery to her special place for peace and balance. This Caregiver states she finds comfort and balance after her Healing Care session. We believe it’s important to have caregivers be in balance in order to manage the needs of their loved one.

Healing Touch and other supportive therapies provide relaxation, comfort, and healing during a stressful time. Individuals can be taught how to integrate these practices into their own lives to promote balance and well-being. Healing Touch is beneficial to cancer survivors and their caregivers. This is a valuable service that can provide healing and harmony during a time of stress and uncertainty. 

 Learn more about author Debra Reis at www.DebraReis.com

References:

1. Wu HS, Harden JK (2015). Symptom burden and quality of life in survivorship: A review of the literature. *Cancer Nurs*, 38:E29-54.
2. Campo RA, Leniek KL, Gaylord-Scott N, et al (2016). Weathering the seasons of cancer survivorship: mind-body therapy use and reported reasons and outcomes by stages of cancer survivorship. *Support Care Cancer*, 24:3783-3791.
3. John GM, Hershman DL, Falci L, et al (2016). Complementary and alternative medicine use among U.S. cancer survivors. *J Cancer Surviv*, 10:850-864.
4. Anderson JG & Taylor AG (2011). Effects of Healing Touch in clinical practice. *J of Hol Nsg*, 29(3):221-228.
5. Seely DM, Weeks LC, Young S (2012). A systematic review of integrative oncology programs. *Curr Oncol*, 19:e436-e461.
6. Hart L, Freel M, Haylock P, Lutgendorf S (2011). The use of Healing Touch in integrative oncology. *Clin J of Onc Nsg*, 15(5):519-524.