

Rena Avants (right) receives Reiki from Marsha Drozdoff, ACSW, during the monthly Reiki Sharing Group at the Arizona Cancer Center.



Healing Hands

UMC patients embrace the healing effects of Reiki



Scientist Ann Baldwin, Ph.D., studies the physiological effects of Reiki on humans and animals.

We know how stressful everyday life can be, even when we are healthy and strong. Now imagine adding the complications of serious illnesses or invasive surgeries. These can produce an overwhelming level of stress that can interfere with the healing process.

Reiki, a Japanese form of stress reduction and energy healing, has helped cancer patients at University Medical Center deal with the high stress when it was introduced in 2001 to patients by social worker Marsha Drozdoff, ACSW.

This noninvasive practice is easily learned by anyone, including children, and may be practiced on oneself and others. During a session, a practitioner moves through a series of hand positions

on the body, remaining for a few minutes in each position as energy is drawn by the recipient through the practitioner.

SHARING THE BENEFITS

Drozdoff first experienced Reiki 10 years ago while battling a baffling neurological disorder. Today she is a certified Reiki master teacher (CRMT), who remains excited about the benefits Reiki can bring to patients.

“I never planned to practice Reiki here at UMC, but when I realized how beneficial it was to patients, it became clear that it would be unethical not to offer it,” Drozdoff says. “I met with staff to discuss it, and they accepted it without question. Stress can get in the way of people’s

ability to heal and make them feel pain. When individuals receive Reiki treatments, they become more comfortable, empowered and may feel more in control of their bodies.”

Through a grant from the Susan G. Komen Foundation, Drozdoff taught Reiki to women with breast cancer and their families. In collaboration with UMC and the Arizona Cancer Center, she conducts a monthly Reiki group-sharing for those who are Reiki-trained. She also integrates Reiki into care for Radiation Oncology patients.

“We have the most advanced medical care at UMC; we also care for the whole person by utilizing complementary modalities like Reiki. Reiki is not a cure for a particular disease, but rather it provides patients with comfort and balance. It helps them to heal,” she says.

UMC VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

In 2006, Mega R. Mease, CRMT and Energy Diagnostic, who introduced Reiki to Drozdoff, began a volunteer Reiki program for patients at UMC. It operates under a structured set of rules, requiring volunteers to complete Advanced or Master-level Reiki training and undergo an in-depth orientation program.

“Our program was designed specifically for UMC in the hope of being a model for other hospitals,” says Mease, whose company, The Center for Advanced Energy Therapeutics (CAET), contracts with UMC to manage, source and fund the program.

Sessions are free to hospitalized patients, their family and friends, and UMC staff. Patients may contact CAET for one additional complimentary session after discharge.

“Reiki supports stress reduction and relaxation so is especially helpful as a complement to invasive medical treatments,” Mease says. “In the midst of a frequently stressful environment, our Reiki teams offer an oasis of calm that helps to support the medical mission.”

MEASURING ITS EFFECTS

After experiencing the effects of Reiki firsthand, Ann Baldwin, Ph.D., a scientist at the University of Arizona College of Medicine and director of Mind-Body-Science (mind-body-science.com), set out to objectively measure its physiological effects.



ONLINE

Reiki Benefits Patients

Learn how you can become a Reiki volunteer or request a Reiki session while hospitalized by visiting **HospitalReiki.com**. If you have received prior Reiki training and are interested in the cancer survivors Reiki Sharing Group, contact Marsha Drozdoff at **520-694-4605**.

In a study sponsored by the National Institutes of Health and published January 2006 in *The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*, Baldwin examined whether Reiki could lessen the effects of noise stress in laboratory rats.

“We found Reiki significantly reduced inflammation of blood vessels typically found in rats that were stressed by noise,” says Baldwin, a professor of physiology and a Reiki master teacher. “I was skeptical at first, so I repeated the experiment twice and had the same results. As I saw more and more evidence of Reiki’s effects, I became convinced that something was going on.”

Today, Baldwin is studying the physiological effects of Reiki on practitioners as they use the technique. “We know that energy flows through every living being,” she says. “With training, a person can learn to allow the energy to flow through themselves and then to others.

“Using tools that allow me to sense heartbeat and brain waves, I can see exactly what is happening to the autonomic nervous system when a person is giving or receiving Reiki treatments,” she says. “I can see that these measurements do change during Reiki. We don’t yet know just how it works, but that is what I am looking into.” 



Mega R. Mease, CRMT and Energy Diagnostic (fourth from left), surrounded by her team of volunteers at UMC.