



# Defining Your Reiki Practice: Part II

## Introducing Reiki to Medical Personnel

BY COLLEEN BENELLI

REIKI IS ACHIEVING MAINSTREAM RECOGNITION for the powerful benefits it provides as a complimentary therapy to conventional medicine. A study done in 2007 by the National Health Interview Survey indicates that 1.2 million adults and 161,000 children received one or more sessions of energy healing therapy such as Reiki in the previous year. According to the American Hospital Association, in 2007, 15%, or over 800 American hospitals offered Reiki as part of their hospital services.<sup>1</sup> The use of Reiki in conventional medicine has become even more popular as health care providers see the positive results Reiki provides for improved patient care in their facility. This article offers a survey of the language most commonly used to define Reiki in hospitals and medical-related sites as well as longer descriptions of Reiki taken from a variety of reputable sources that interface with Reiki in medical settings. This information will be helpful to you if as a Reiki practitioner, you have chosen to offer Reiki within some area of conventional medical practice and would like to feel assured that you are communicating the essence of Reiki in language that will be understood as fully as possible. It may also prove useful if you have friends and family who would be more comfortable with a neutral or more scientific description of Reiki. I have included the resources from my research for this article in case you want to do additional research.

It is important for Reiki practitioners and teachers to have clear explanations for Reiki when working in conventional healthcare systems. We need to be able to communicate the information about Reiki in a way that “will satisfy the critical thinking of doctors, hospital administrators, insurance executives and health care regulators.”<sup>2</sup> Because integrative medicine is fairly new to conventional medicine, there is little scientific documentation on the efficacy of many types of complimentary therapies and energy medicines such as Reiki, in large part due to a lack of clinical trials or laboratory studies. So it is even more important that we present Reiki professionally and with descriptions pertinent to the environment in which we are explaining it.

“In the hospital setting Reiki is presented as a technique which reduces stress and promotes relaxation, thereby enhancing the body’s natural ability to heal itself,” according to Patricia Alandydy, RN, Reiki Master and Assistant Director of Surgical Services at Portsmouth Regional Hospital in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.<sup>3</sup> This explanation of Reiki, or a version of it, seems to be fairly common and effective.

### Medical Terms

Hospitals and medical facilities have different departments of care. In my research, I found that Reiki typically fits into the Integrative Medicine Department, the Mind Body Department, or the Spiritual Care Department. Reiki is mostly described as a *complimentary therapy* in these departments, as it is used as an adjunct to conventional medical treatments.

Here is some of the terminology that is useful to understand clearly when discussing Reiki in health care venues.

- *Conventional Medicine* – A system in which medical doctors and other healthcare professionals treat symptoms and diseases using drugs, radiation or surgery. Also called allopathic medicine, biomedicine, mainstream medicine, orthodox medicine and Western medicine.<sup>4</sup>
- CAM – Complimentary and Alternative Medicine

<sup>1</sup> Center for Reiki Research, [www.centerforreikiresearch.com](http://www.centerforreikiresearch.com).

<sup>2</sup> Pamela Miles, comment on LinkedIn, Reiki Professionals group, [www.linkedin.com/groupItem?view=&gid=147328&type=member&item=272153987&qid=1a715c51-00a8-4326-b0a1-f6a493adcf48&goback=%2Egmp\\_147328](http://www.linkedin.com/groupItem?view=&gid=147328&type=member&item=272153987&qid=1a715c51-00a8-4326-b0a1-f6a493adcf48&goback=%2Egmp_147328).

<sup>3</sup> [www.reiki.org/reikinews/reiki\\_in\\_hospitals.html#8](http://www.reiki.org/reikinews/reiki_in_hospitals.html#8).

<sup>4</sup> National Cancer Institute at the National Institutes of Health (NCI), [www.cancer.gov/dictionary?cdrid=449752](http://www.cancer.gov/dictionary?cdrid=449752).

- *Complimentary Therapy* – generally refers to the use of a non-mainstream approach **together with** conventional medicine.<sup>5</sup>
- *Alternative Therapy* – refers to using a non-mainstream approach **in place of** conventional medicine.
- *Integrative Medicine* – Integrative medicine, based upon a model of health and wellness rather than on disease, is the practice of medicine that focuses on the whole person and makes use of all appropriate therapeutic approaches, healthcare professionals and disciplines to achieve optimal health and healing.<sup>6</sup>
- *Mind and Body Practices* – a term used by NCCAM to describe a category of “complimentary health approaches.”<sup>7</sup> Hospitals sometimes call their integrative medicine and complimentary therapy the MindBody Department.
- *Spiritual care* – hospitals typically have a Spiritual Care department that provides pastoral care to their patients.
- *Bio-field Therapies* – therapies that are intended to affect energy fields that purportedly surround and penetrate the human body. The existence of such fields has not yet been scientifically proven. Some forms of energy therapy, also referred to as energy medicine, manipulate bio-fields by applying pressure and/or...by placing the hands in, or through, these fields. Examples include qi gong, Reiki and Therapeutic Touch.<sup>8</sup> Practitioners believe they can stimulate healing by restoring balance in the body and opening the flow of energy through it.<sup>9</sup>
- *Holistic Medicine* – Holistic medicine is the art and science of healing that addresses care of the whole person—body, mind and spirit. The practice of holistic medicine integrates conventional and complementary therapies to promote optimal health, and prevent and treat disease by addressing contributing factors.<sup>10</sup>
- *Spiritual Healing* – “Spiritual healing is the intentional influence of one or more people upon one or more living systems without utilizing known physical means of intervention. It is commonly practiced in two major ways: With a laying-on of hands – the hands lightly touching or held near to the body, often combined with visualizations; and with meditation, prayer or other focused intent, again often combined with visualizations.”<sup>11</sup>
- *Palliative Care* – an area of healthcare that focuses on relieving and preventing the suffering of patients. Unlike hospice care, palliative care is appropriate for patients in all disease stages, including those undergoing treatment for curable illnesses and those living with chronic diseases, as well as patients who are nearing the end of life. Palliative medicine utilizes a multidisciplinary approach to patient care...in formulating a plan of care to relieve suffering in all areas of a patient’s life.<sup>12</sup>
- *Hospice Care* – Considered to be the model for quality, compassionate care at the end of life, hospice care, which often includes Reiki, involves a team-oriented approach of expert medical care, pain management, and emotional and spiritual support expressly tailored to the patient’s wishes. Emotional and spiritual support is also extended to the family and loved ones.<sup>13</sup>

### Describing the Results of Reiki

It is also useful to be able to describe the results medical institutions have found with the use of Reiki. The following websites give examples of the language the organizations use to describe the results of Reiki as a part of integrative medicine and complimentary therapies.

- On the American Lung Association website, Reiki is listed under *Integrative Medicine* and *Energy Work* along with Tai Chi and Therapeutic Touch. Here is their statement about one of these protocols: “Integrative medicine can be used to *control pain, reduce anxiety, reduce side effects and improve quality of life.*”<sup>14</sup>
- One Mesothelioma (cancer of the linings of organs) website recommends Reiki as a complimentary therapy, and describes it as “a Japanese term meaning “life force energy.” It further states, “Reiki promotes the belief that spiritual energy can be channeled through a trained Reiki practitioner to heal a patient’s spirit. Cancer patients who have had success with Reiki note that their pain decreases, their sleeping improves, the overwhelming feeling of tension decreases, and that they experience an overall feeling of well-being after the treatments.”<sup>15</sup>
- The National Multiple Sclerosis Society, in its “Guide for Families,” considers Reiki an “*effective stress reducer for caregivers. Benefits of Reiki are reported as relaxation and feelings of peace, security and well being.*”<sup>16</sup>



## INTRODUCING REIKI

To find more results, simply type Reiki into the search bar of health care websites. This can provide you with valuable information about how the medical community for that particular illness or medical issue views Reiki.

### The Center for Reiki Research

Perhaps the leading resource for information about Reiki in health care systems is The Center for Reiki Research. In 2009, The Center for Reiki Research completed The Touchstone Project, which summarizes Reiki studies published in peer-reviewed journals. The 25 studies examined were further evaluated to determine the effectiveness of Reiki. The conclusion states: "Overall, based on the summaries of those studies that were rated according to scientific rigor as "Very Good" or "Excellent" by at least one reviewer and were not rated as weak by any reviewer, 83 percent show moderate to strong evidence in support of Reiki as a therapeutic modality."<sup>17</sup>

The Center also provides a list of hospitals, medical centers and hospice programs where Reiki is offered for patients and staff. Each hospital listing offers detailed descriptions of the program including organization, number of practitioners and contact person(s) if provided. The basic facts of each program have been verified and approved by the hospital before they are listed on the website.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>5</sup> National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM), [nccam.nih.gov/health/whatiscam](http://nccam.nih.gov/health/whatiscam).

<sup>6</sup> [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Integrative\\_medicine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Integrative_medicine).

<sup>7</sup> [nccam.nih.gov/health/whatiscam](http://nccam.nih.gov/health/whatiscam).

<sup>8</sup> [cim.ucdavis.edu/clubs/camsig/whatiscam.pdf](http://cim.ucdavis.edu/clubs/camsig/whatiscam.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> Canadian Cancer Society, [www.cancer.ca/en/cancer-information/diagnosis-and-treatment/complementary-therapies/energy-therapies/?region=on#ixzz2pYBfLbD6](http://www.cancer.ca/en/cancer-information/diagnosis-and-treatment/complementary-therapies/energy-therapies/?region=on#ixzz2pYBfLbD6).

<sup>10</sup> American Holistic Medical Association(AHMA), [www.holisticmedicine.org/content.asp?pl=2&sl=43&contentid=43](http://www.holisticmedicine.org/content.asp?pl=2&sl=43&contentid=43).

<sup>11</sup> The Scientific and Medical Network. [www.scimednet.org/spiritual-healing](http://www.scimednet.org/spiritual-healing).

<sup>12</sup> [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palliative\\_care](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palliative_care).

<sup>13</sup> National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization, [www.nhpco.org/about-nhpco](http://www.nhpco.org/about-nhpco).


<sup>14</sup> [www.lung.org](http://www.lung.org).

<sup>15</sup> [www.mesothelioma.com/treatment/alternative/reiki.htm](http://www.mesothelioma.com/treatment/alternative/reiki.htm).

<sup>16</sup> [www.nationalmssociety.org/about-multiple-sclerosis/living-with-advanced-ms/download.aspx?id=789](http://www.nationalmssociety.org/about-multiple-sclerosis/living-with-advanced-ms/download.aspx?id=789) Guide for Families.


<sup>17</sup> The Center for Reiki Research, Touchstone Project, Conclusion, [www.centerforreikiresearch.org/RRConclusion.aspx](http://www.centerforreikiresearch.org/RRConclusion.aspx).

<sup>18</sup> [www.centerforreikiresearch.org](http://www.centerforreikiresearch.org).



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See "Directory of Reiki Teachers Licensed by ICRT" at the back of this magazine, or go to [www.reikilifestyle.com](http://www.reikilifestyle.com) for complete information.

## Looking for a Reiki community?



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The Center for Reiki Research has also developed the “Reiki in Hospitals PowerPoint Presentation”<sup>19</sup> and has made it available to people who want to present a Reiki program to a health care administrator. It includes a description of Reiki, how a hospital Reiki program works, its benefits to patients and hospital staff, a list of prominent hospitals that have programs and the research studies that support the therapeutic value of Reiki.

### Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles on Reiki and Nursing

The following are excerpts from peer-reviewed articles written by nurses advocating Reiki as a complimentary therapy in oncology, hospice and urban health. These also offer effective descriptions of Reiki in health care.

“Oncology nurses are often on the cutting edge of new therapies and support coping, health, and healing. Reiki is a practice that is requested with increasing frequency, is easy to learn, does not require expensive equipment, and in preliminary research, elicits a relaxation response and helps patients to feel more peaceful and experience less pain.”<sup>20</sup>

“Reiki is a complementary, energy-based healing modality.... Reiki training offers a precise technique for tapping into healing energy, or Ki, and transmitting it through touch. Reiki treatments are gently balancing and provide energy that supports the well being of the recipient in a holistic and individualistic way.... Reiki is easily adaptable to nursing practice in a variety of settings, and can provide support for the practitioners of Reiki themselves, as well as benefiting those they treat with Reiki.”<sup>21</sup>

“Reiki is a vibrational, or subtle energy, therapy most commonly facilitated by light touch, which is believed to balance the bio-field and strengthen the body’s ability to heal itself. Although systematic study of efficacy is scant thus far, Reiki is increasingly used as an adjunct to conventional medical care, both in and out of hospital settings.”<sup>22</sup>

Additional peer-reviewed articles about Reiki and nurses are available at the National Center for Biotechnical Information (NCBI). There are also excellent peer-reviewed articles for Reiki listed on the Center for Reiki Research website.<sup>23</sup>

### Personal Experiences with Reiki in Hospitals

I am a member of The Northwest Reiki Association, here in Portland, Oregon. This group is dedicated to bridging the local

Reiki community with the medical community. We have established volunteer Reiki programs in three Compass Oncology Clinics, Providence Medical Center’s Inpatient Rehab Unit and OHSU/Tuality Oncology. There are currently over 250 members and volunteers. The president of the NWRA, Kathryn Missetich, trains the Reiki volunteers to use standardized Reiki practices in the professional and medical settings. The volunteers also must agree to follow the NWRA codes of ethics and conduct, dress codes and use the documentation forms provided by the clinic. The Reiki volunteers must have a minimum of Reiki Level II training in order to give Reiki to patients and must carry liability insurance.

The training for Reiki volunteers includes the appropriate description of Reiki, which they are asked to use consistently. The NWRA description of Reiki is: “Reiki is a safe, gentle, non-invasive healing technique. It complements any medical treatment by stimulating the body’s own natural healing process. Reiki carries no side effects, reduces stress and promotes deep relaxation.”

If asked, the volunteers inform the client that Reiki is “not a substitute for medical care; it is instead a valuable part of a wholesome wellness program.” They never diagnose, suggest changes in treatment or guarantee healing or complete recovery. Volunteers begin the Reiki sessions by activating Reiki privately. They do not draw symbols on their hands or in the room in front of clients. They don’t “process” the patients by discussing their session or share any psychic impressions. They talk about Reiki in a neutral way, without talking about spirituality or energy medicine.

The NWRA volunteers document their Reiki sessions, and in 2012, “Patients experienced an 80% decrease in pain and a 91% decrease in stress, of those patients reporting pain and stress before and after Reiki treatment.” Some patients did not report any pain and/or stress before receiving Reiki so those were not included in these statistics. These statistics are described to the patients who are first learning about Reiki.<sup>24</sup>

Reiki Masters Jacquie Hashizume and Gayle Hammitt started and currently run Reiki programs in the Mid Columbia Medical Center and the Celilo Cancer Center in The Dalles, Oregon. Their Reiki program was established through the Spiritual Care department of the hospital rather than the Mind Body department, so it is completely appropriate for them to talk about the spirituality of Reiki. They offer opening prayers before their sessions, and Gayle said she describes Reiki as “unconditional love and a gift from God.” This medical facility has a high regard for spirituality—they offer beautiful meditation rooms and a labyrinth on their helicopter

pad! However, Gayle and Jacquie agree that if Reiki were offered through the Mind Body department of the hospital, they might modify their description of Reiki to match that department.

Mary Thies created a Reiki program for The Providence Child's Center for Medically Fragile Children in Portland, Oregon.<sup>25</sup> She found that the mission statement for the child's center and her mission for the Reiki program were the same. "Reiki as healing work reflects Providence's central mission of revealing love for the most vulnerable through compassionate service. As a program of the Comfort Care Committee at the Providence Child Center, Reiki brings comfort, compassion and an improved quality of life to children residing at the center. [It is [t]he first of its kind within the context of a long-term pediatric residential facility."<sup>26</sup> The Reiki program has been so successful for the children that the Providence Center promotes the success of their Reiki program to other Child Centers through presentations at national Child Center conventions. Mary is paid by the center for her Reiki services.

Susannah Spanton has been a Reiki therapist for Heartland Hospice in the Philadelphia area for years. She is a contract employee and Reiki is part of the complimentary services offered by Heartland. I asked her how she described Reiki to the hospice patients and their families. She said, "My description with each family is unique depending on the family. I am more likely to explain it in detail to the family than to the client. When speaking with the older patients, I keep my description of Reiki very simple. I tell them that I have very warm hands that can bring them comfort, help them sleep and ease some of their pain."

The information presented in this article will help you describe Reiki in the most accepted medical terminology so that you can present Reiki professionally. I was pleasantly surprised to find how easy it was to research Reiki in medicine, realizing that Reiki is gaining more and more mainstream recognition in medical fields for the positive healing results it provides. There is clear evidence that Reiki is a complimentary therapy that benefits integrated medicine programs.



—Colleen can be reached by email at [colleen@reikilifestyle.com](mailto:colleen@reikilifestyle.com), by phone at 503.912.0664 or on her website, [www.reikilifestyle.com](http://www.reikilifestyle.com). You can also ask Colleen Reiki questions on her monthly ReikiChat™ calls, [www.reikichat.com](http://www.reikichat.com).

<sup>19</sup> [www.reikiresearch.org](http://www.reikiresearch.org).

<sup>20</sup> L. M. Bossi, M. J. Ott and S. DeCristofaro, "Reiki as a clinical intervention in oncology nursing practice," abstract, [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/18515247](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/18515247). Complete study: *Clin J Oncol Nurs*. 2008 Jun, 12(3):489–94. doi: 10.1188/08.CJON.489–494.

<sup>21</sup> R. Gallob, "Reiki: a supportive therapy in nursing practice and self-care for nurses," [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/14639776](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/14639776). Complete study: *J N Y State Nurses Assoc*. 2003 Spring-Summer, 34(1): 9–13.

<sup>22</sup> P. Miles and G. True, "Reiki: review of a biofield therapy history, theory, practice, and research," *Altern Ther Health Med*. 2003 Mar–Apr, 9(2):62–72. Source: Albert Einstein Center for Urban Health Policy and Research, Philadelphia, PA, USA.

<sup>23</sup> [www.centerforreikiresearch.org](http://www.centerforreikiresearch.org).

<sup>24</sup> [www.nwreikiassociation.com](http://www.nwreikiassociation.com).

<sup>25</sup> [www.marythiesmassage.com](http://www.marythiesmassage.com).

<sup>26</sup> [marythiesmassage.com/reiki/](http://marythiesmassage.com/reiki/).