BOOK REVIEW by Barbara Dahl, BSN, RN, HTCP/I

The Energy Cure: Unraveling the Mystery of Hands-On Healing by William Bengston, PhD

What was your introduction to energy medicine? Therapeutic Touch in nursing school? A weekend Reiki workshop? Healing Touch treatment after surgery? William Bengston learned how to heal from an evolved healer, a complex man who cleaned houses for a living and who had a natural gift for healing. He vaporized clouds and cured cancer the same way. Over time, Bengston, a sociologist and researcher, developed a program to teach his student lab assistants this healing technique. In spite of their skepticism, or because of it, they healed their subjects, mice injected with an aggressive form of cancer. Furthermore, the mice were immune to cancer when reinjected.

The Bengston method involves a process of image cycling. After identifying 20 things you want and attaching an image to each one, you then create a fast moving picture show with those images and run this film during hands-on healing. The intention is to get the ego out of the way, to become irrelevant, "To distract the conscious mind from the healing work of the hands and allow them to move naturally, instinctively, unconsciously".

Bengston declares that his method is not faith-based. "Faith usually comes with a lot of dogmatic baggage." His religion is science. However, he refers to the Source of energy with a capital "S" and considers himself a vehicle for Universal Energy. He acknowledges that he is in touch with an external source of power. Semantics? Some would call that God. He notes near the end of the book that he is a recent student of Buddhism - thus following the spiritual path of personal growth of most healers. He even divulges that on occasion he calls upon guides or the "Fellows" as he calls them for help because he has seen them, whereas, he has not seen God.

Holding a cage containing the infected mice on his lap and with hands on both sides, he found that the mice would gravitate to his left hand, "even laying their tumors against it." Was this his sending hand or were the mice actually feeling the cancer being drawn out by his receiving hand?

In his work with humans, he found that his method did not achieve a cure with those clients who had gone through chemotherapy and radiation. He acknowledges that, "My belief that I can't cure anyone who had radiation or chemo may be a self-limiting one. Perhaps as a healer I have crippled my own mind through negative thinking".

Bengston's research with mice and his work with human clients has produced exciting findings - all rejected so far by Western medicine. He continues with research studies that have pointed to a strong connection between healing and the immune system.

This reader questions the necessity of Bengston's rather complex imaging cycle if the goal is to distract from the work. A student once asked Janet Mentgen, founder of Healing Touch Program, what she thought about when she was doing "the work." She replied, "Nothing." Was she focused on the work or totally distracted? As with other energy healing modalities, there is considerable overlap with Healing Touch and Bengston makes no claim that his way is the only way. He is clearly contributing to the science of energy medicine with his research and his book is worth reading, even worth a second read.