

Healing Touch and Wound Care: The Cutting Edge

by Ellen F. Laffey, HTCP

While working as an Administrative Assistant in Wound Care at Aurora St. Luke's Medical Center, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, I completed my certification for Healing Touch.

One day, I overheard our Wound Care nurses talking about attending a Wound Care Case Study evening. A Case Study evening is where the nurses from our Wound Care sites gather and present cases that have been successful, or difficult, or teach about a new product/treatment, how it works and its outcomes.

I was a Level 2 student at the time and offered HT to a patient who was discouraged because she had a recalcitrant abdominal wound that had worsened. She agreed to try HT, and I did the Spiral Meditation, Charka Connection, and Wound Sealing. She opened herself to healing -- and the wound healed quickly after the session.

I thought the nurses might like to know more about Healing Touch. I asked Kathy Nelson, our research nurse, if she thought the group might be open to a case study on Healing Touch. She loved the idea and provided an outline for me to follow.

I reviewed the patient's chart, which took about a week, documenting diagnosis, past medical history, medications, wound care treatments utilized, wound measurements, when HT was initiated and ended, and outcomes with photo documentation. After completing my chart review, I reduced my presentation to the most pertinent facts. When the evening arrived, I was nervous. These were all RNs, yet friends, and our Medical Director, Jeffrey Niezgoda, MD. I had insisted on going first -- or I would never be able to enjoy the delicious display of food we all brought for the evening. When my presentation was finished, the nurses had more questions about Healing Touch and why I felt called to do this work -- than questions about the patient.

The next day, Dr. Niezgoda phoned me. He said that my presentation was excellent, and "How would you like to prepare a poster and present it in San Diego at the 18th Annual

Symposium on Advanced Wound Care?" Being in shock, my answer was "I guess so." I called my husband, Bill, and he said, "No wife of mine is going to turn down this opportunity."

As I did not know how to put together an abstract and poster, others attending this same symposium said they would help. When the time came, everyone was too busy. So, off I went to get good old white poster board. I retrieved the photos I needed and taped papers to where I felt the poster looked balanced. I gave my work to the Medical Director, and lo and behold a poster was formed. Interesting how the universe pushes you into learning when you hope someone else will do the work for you.

SAN DIEGO

Conference presenters Dr. Niezgoda, Mary Verhage, RN, Greg Raleigh, Hyperbaric Technical Lead, Poster Presenter Kathy Nelson, RN (all co-workers), my husband, Bill, our son, Mike, and I flew to San Diego. Until they gave me my badge saying "Presenter," I felt Bill was the one presenting and I was the wife along for the ride. The Healing Touch/Wound Care poster entitled Wound Care and Complementary Medicine: The Impact of Healing Touch was one of 300 posters chosen. At the opening ceremony it was announced that these posters were the 'cutting edge' of wound care.

My responsibility was to stand next to the poster for two hours each day and talk about Healing Touch in the Wound Care setting. "Hi there, have you thought about including HT in your Wound Care Clinic?" was my pitch. One doctor said he wanted energy medicine in his orthopedic clinic but was afraid his colleagues would laugh at him. A nursing home administrator thought this would be a good complementary therapy for his residents. I did *Ultrasound* on a lady's wrist while talking with others gathered around the poster. Greg noted that the HT poster had more people surrounding it than any other.

As the conference and my introduction of HT to the Wound Care world ended, I had a feeling that I had never had before.

What is this I asked myself? All of a sudden the word 'self-esteem' came to me. I had never experienced self-esteem before. Amazing! Healing for this patient, healing introduced to the Wound Care world and healing for me!

NASHVILLE, TN

A call went out for posters for the Clinical Symposium on Advances in Skin and Wound Care in Nashville, TN. I wrote the abstract and won second place and an all expense paid trip to Nashville. This poster's theme was quality of life and was entitled Journey to Self-Healing Through Healing Touch. Spreading my wings with self-esteem on board, I traveled alone to my second poster presentation. After my arrival, I joined Dr. Niezgodka and three other nurse co-workers who were also presenting posters.

My poster presented a patient with left leg wound. She felt she was going to die with these wounds. After each HT treatment, her homework was always to have fun and report back to me about what she did. Her 'fun' list grew each session. The wounds shrunk enough to have a skin graft. I called the surgeon and asked if she would say - while the patient was under anesthesia - "The graft was a success and the wounds can now close." The surgeon agreed. The wound closed much to the patient's amazement.

At this conference, the requirement was that I stand by my poster for three hours each day. This time I was pretty comfortable about reeling in passersby with my HT sales pitch. I met a woman from Alaska who shared her alternative energy healing techniques, as she couldn't always get medicine to those who were in need. One man stopping by remarked, "Doesn't just holding their hand make people feel better?" Where does one begin to answer that statement and teach about HT in one minute's time? Talk Fast!

At dinner, Dr. Niezgodka asked me, "Well, Ellen, are you ready to do an oral presentation?" I think it was the wine that said 'Yes.'

The third poster is completed and submitted to an Advanced Wound Care Symposium in Dallas, TX for April 2009. My intention: An oral presentation and poster presentation at this symposium with practitioners from the Dallas area offering HT to attendees. If accepted, that really will be 'cutting edge'!



Initial Consultation



Healing Touch initiated



2 days after Healing Touch initiated



Wound closure

Above: photos of wound healing progress taken from one of Ellen Laffey's poster presentations.

Find both posters at <http://www.hwca-inc.com> Select "Professional Information"; Select "Case Studies"; Choose the appropriate poster to download.

1. Wound Care and Complementary Medicine: The Impact of Healing Touch
2. Journey to Self-Healing Through Healing Touch