



# Healing Touch at New Horizons

by Valmai Nathan, RN, HTCP

Albany Hospital/Hospice, located in Albany; Western Australia (420 kilometers south of our capital city, Perth) has a catchment area of 40,000 square kilometers in the Great Southern Region of Western Australia. New Horizons Complementary Therapy Unit is adjacent to this facility and is one of only a few such facilities in Australia, which offer complementary therapies for hospitalized and outpatient clients.

Since opening six years ago we have had 616 clients access our services and have given 5055 treatments. Presently we are open three days a week. We are currently negotiating the opportunity of extending these days in approximately two years when we relocate to the Albany Health Campus, which is presently being built.

Our aim is to implement complementary therapies in conjunction with traditional medicine to produce positive results for patients. Not only do we see patients with cancer but also people from the community with any life threatening illness, those suffering from depression or grief, as well as, their caregivers. Many are leaving better informed, with an improved sense of empowerment, and often with a greater sense of peace as a result of the information, advice, support and

complementary therapies our center offers.

2007 was a milestone in my life when I gained the position of Coordinator for the center. The therapists at our center are all volunteers who offer a wide range of complementary therapies. We presently have eight Healing Touch practitioners, who at the expense of personal time and income, provide their services for the community. Other Healing Touch practitioners, who have just completed courses, also have expressed an interest in joining our team. Our yearly data has again validated the positive results our clients are gaining from their treatments. We found that we are beginning to show the skeptics that some of these “*touchy-feely*” interventions can be vitally important in helping people psychologically deal with their cancer or illness, and to have the best possible outcome for mainstream medical treatment.

Our referrals from doctors and allied services are gradually increasing as they hear about and see the benefits their patients are receiving through complementary therapies. We also have received support from numerous organizations, such as cancer support and caregiver support groups who are now referring clients to us. More than anything our clients in the community are spreading positive feedback about the benefits of our therapies by word of mouth.

We have a large array of clients with numerous conditions whether it be physical or emotional, especially those in Hospice, relatives of those in Hospice, or who have recently lost loved ones. There are numerous requests from clients for balancing pre and post surgery or chemotherapy. Many of our clients are bed-bound or come in wheelchairs. It is wonderful to see the relaxation on their faces or smiles during or after treatments along with the positive feedback from the family members who also gain comfort seeing their loved ones relax. It is magnificent to see that an hour of Healing Touch can make such a change in their lives physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually.

The Healing Touch practitioners have often commented on the number of techniques they can use on their patients who have an array of ailments. Caregivers from the community have commented on how the “*quality*” of their lives is improved after treatments. Frequently, until they have a voucher from their network support for a free treatment they would never have thought of taking “*time for themselves.*”

Often the concept of complementary therapies is new to clients, especially the elderly. However with a gentle introduction clients open themselves to “*anything that might help*” and convey their gratitude to all involved who have attempted to make them more comfortable. Numerous clients have stated that they were so relaxed they felt as if they were floating on clouds, or as one described it, a “*conscious sleep*” and had “*no worries in the world.*” Some have informed us that the treatment they received was better than any medication they could take.

Practitioners have also commented on seeing colours on clients and themselves, and having sensory feelings, such as a tingling sensation from clients who recently had radiation. Sometimes during pre and post treatment assessments practitioners have found distraught auras, quite often due to past injuries which the client had neglected to mention. This again reinforces that cellular memory can be stored in the body which clients do not remember until prompted by the practitioner.

One client reported that the “*emotional healing*” she experienced during her treatment caused her physical disease symptoms to disappear. We also have comments like “*I can feel my feet*” from clients who, when questioned, explain that they have been diabetic for some length of time and have not had feeling

in their feet for several years. This was both enlightening to the client and the practitioner. Often after these chats clients are given referrals to other facilities that may be able to assist them.

Many times clients inform us that their symptoms were reduced or relieved after a couple of treatments. Along with the relaxation they gain from their treatment they frequently open up and begin to talk about their future, whether it be their wishes and desires or fears relating to their illness and possible outcomes for themselves or family. We have found that listening is one of the greatest “*tools*” that we can use. The clients often describe that they feel they are on an emotional roller coaster or feel trapped and need a break from everything going on in their lives such as talking to medical staff or their families and say that talking to a non-judgemental person often is so important. We also provide the opportunity for clients to drop in for a coffee and chat whenever they like.

The HT practitioners often suggest to the clients some simple strategies, i.e. a short meditation, relaxation techniques or simple Healing Touch techniques that they can use on themselves at home. This empowers the individuals to assist in their own healing, whatever their journey may be.

We encourage the staff from Hospice, Hospital and allied health services to visit and experience our treatments. A greater majority of staff mentioned that they really did not know they were “*stressed.*” Because of the numerous benefits they receive during their sessions, many are returning to seek Healing Touch on a regular basis.

In the past few years New Horizons has been invited to give presentations or organize displays for numerous groups in the community. At these sessions we have had practitioners volunteer their time to do short treatments on attendees. ***Mind Clearing, Pain Drain*** or ***Magnetic Passes*** were used to give relief to those who were interested in experiencing a complementary therapy.

As Healing Touch practitioners, we give thanks for our clients and families, for their gifts of wisdom and grace, and for our role in being a healing presence on their journey. We all agree that whatever we manifest will be for the highest order for Healing Touch as we move forward to spread healing throughout the world.

I am enormously grateful to our volunteer therapists and practitioners. They are the true heroes in this story.

### About the author:



Valmai has been a registered nurse for 35 years and has been involved with energy healing for the past 11 years. She works as the Coordinator for new Horizons Complementary Therapy Unit, which is adjacent to Hospice and her regional hospital.

She also works on a surgical/high dependency ward at Albany Regional Hospital. In the past 11 years she has been involved as coordinator for numerous Healing Touch Workshops and organized a support group for Healing Touch practitioners in the region.

Valmai has an interest in colour therapy along with preparing and using Australian wildflower essences to treat her clients (both human and animal). Since childhood, she has always enjoyed being able to work and assist with the healing of animals both great and small.

Her vision is to integrate the sacred art of Healing Touch as a complementary therapy into the mainstream medicine to produce positive results for patients and families. In her spare time Valmai treats people and animals in her private practice.