



Associate Wellness Through an Energetic Approach: Healing Touch in the Workplace



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The program was implemented in February, 2014 at St. Mary's Healthcare, Amsterdam, New York, a member of Ascension Health, the largest not-for-profit Catholic healthcare network in the world. As stated in our Philosophy, *"the facility from is committed to the achievement of excellence in the field of healthcare."* Further, *"because all people are created in the image of God, St. Mary's Healthcare holds a deep and profound respect for all who enter our care. Everyone associated with St. Mary's participates in its healing ministry, which involves bodily and spiritual healing as well as the healing of relationships and emotions in all stages of life from conception to death."*¹

As a Healing Touch Certified Practitioner (1996) and a Healing Touch Certified Instructor (1997), I have observed the growth of Healing Touch in our hospital, which is certainly in keeping with our Philosophy. Patients and family members have experienced the positive benefits of Healing Touch through the generous service of our Healing Touch volunteers. It has been a privilege to work with these volunteers who provide Healing Touch throughout the hospital and to residents in our Skilled Nursing Facility. In addition, since 1999, volunteers and I have offered Healing Touch to hundreds of women with breast cancer in our Healing Touch Buddies Program.

In October 2013, a Nurse Manager, recognizing the stress among her staff, met with me to request that Healing Touch be offered to her staff. I responded immediately by contacting our Healing Touch volunteers who proceeded to provide 15-minute Healing Touch treatments to her staff in October and December. The response from the associates who received treatments was positive and resulted in an invitation from the Nurse Manager to provide Healing Touch treatments, monthly, for her staff.

While associates have been the recipients of Healing Touch, sporadically for many years, it seemed important to name the program with the intention of increasing visibility and organization. Thus, Associate Wellness Through An Energetic Approach: Healing Touch in the Workplace became a reality.

One might ask "What is in a name?" The President & CEO and Vice-President for Nursing enthusiastically accepted this avenue for helping associates deal with caregiver stress. A presentation I gave at a Leadership/Management meeting about the program was met with equal enthusiasm as expressed in one of many responses received: *"Thank you for your great presentation at the management meeting today! I would love to have you and your volunteers come to the Cancer Services Department as a nice reward for the team!"* The positive response from other department manag-



ers with requests of Healing Touch for their staff was a joy to experience. I supported their eagerness and scheduled dates and times for Healing Touch treatments that met their needs.

Program Vision and Design

Through a Healing Presence during a 15-minute Healing Touch session, provided in a chair, we share the vision of healthcare to create a healthy environment in which stress and pain levels are maintained at a minimal level. Our hope is to increase an awareness of the need for self-care among our associates.

for her staff: *"Healing Touch has provided another form of self-care to our associates. Initially, our associates were reluctant to try the Healing Touch treatments. We find, now, that they look forward to monthly treatments. We have observed that the mood on our nursing unit is calmer in the midst of circumstances for days and weeks following the 15-minute Healing Touch treatments. We originally used Healing Touch as a means of decreasing anxiety secondary to the death of a fellow associate. We have continued with monthly treatments in order to help with work-life balance and to promote care of the caregiver."*

"We have observed that the mood on our nursing unit is calmer in the midst of circumstances for days and weeks following the 15-minute Healing Touch treatments."

All Healing Touch practitioners follow the Ten Step Healing Touch Sequence with appropriate documentation at the conclusion of each session. The intention of practitioners during each session is to restore harmony and balance in the energy system, placing the client (associate) in a position to self-heal. The associates enjoy a quiet, safe space with relaxation music throughout the session.

A one to two hour scheduled time is offered in each workplace setting. Following this, I send each manager the collated results, including associate comments and stress and pain levels reported before and after the Healing Touch treatment. The data is reported anonymously since associates have shared stress from home and workplace situations during sessions. The majority of reported pain was in the lower back, neck, shoulders and headaches. I believe that sharing this information has increased visibility, gratitude and enthusiasm for the program as evidenced from messages of appreciation sent to me from our CEO, Vice-President for Nursing and Department Managers.

Further gratitude was expressed from a Nurse Manager who requested monthly Healing Touch treatments

Volunteers

Healing Touch volunteers must have completed a Healing Touch Level 1 Class during which students are made aware of the Healing Touch Volunteer Program through the Center for Complementary Therapies. This program provides Healing Touch to hospital patients and to women with breast cancer in the Healing Touch Buddies Program. It also includes volunteering at the Annual Complementary Therapies Conference, now in its 15th year!

Interested students then contact the Director of Volunteer Services for an interview and subsequently an orientation tour of the hospital. Completion of all medical and other hospital requirements are kept on file in the volunteer office. All persons expressing an interest in becoming a Healing Touch volunteer, including Healing Touch Certified Practitioners (HTCPs) follow the same requirements.

Five Healing Touch volunteers continue to give of their time and talents for the purpose of helping associates to experience relaxation and pain reduction through Healing Touch. I am deeply grateful to these volunteers. Three of the volunteers are Healing Touch



Certified Practitioners, one volunteer has completed Healing Touch Level 4 and one has completed Healing Touch Level 3.

During the Healing Touch sessions, volunteers are eager to teach associates Healing Touch self-care interventions for pain reduction such as Ultra-sound and Magnetic Passes. In addition, associates are encouraged to practice Centering/Mindfulness each day, even if only for brief periods. We, as practitioners, are aware of the negative impact of stress on one's blood pressure, immune system and the whole person - mind, body, and spirit. Each of us is eager to raise awareness among our associates of the importance of self-care in support of each person's health and well-being.

Volunteers document responses shared by associates at the conclusion of each Healing Touch session. Many associates expressed "I feel relaxed" or "I feel no more stress." These comments, and others, reflect the beneficial effects of Healing Touch experienced by our associates as well as their expressions of gratitude.

As the Director of the Center for Complementary Therapies, it is a privilege to be a member of this team providing Healing Touch treatments and promoting self-care. Three-hundred and seventeen associates have benefited from these 15- minute sessions.

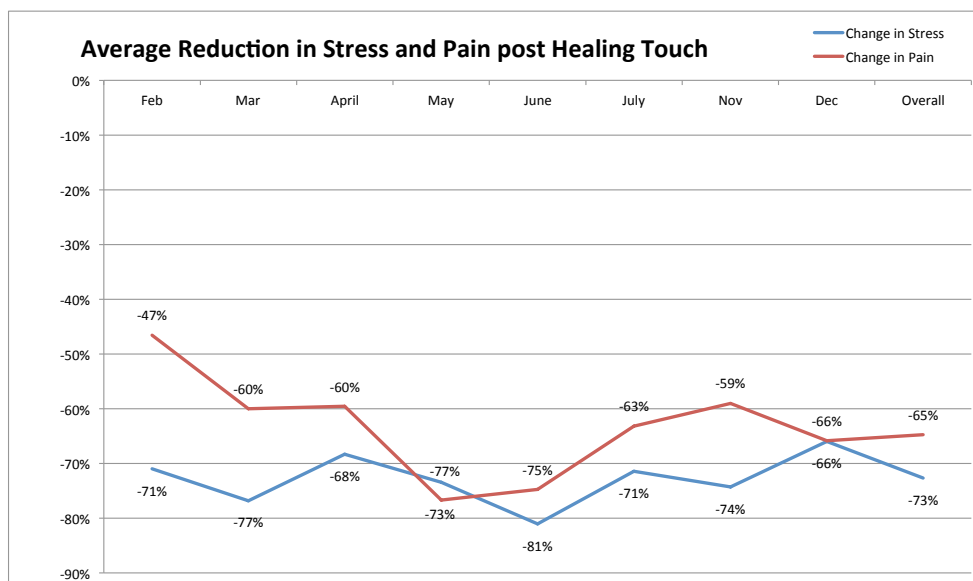
In addition to our volunteer program, several associates (hospital staff) who are Healing Touch Certified Practitioners, offer Healing Touch to patients in the nursing clinical areas, medical imaging, behavioral health, chemical dependency rehabilitation unit and in a Family Health Center. All sessions are documented on an approved documentation record.

The following examples of associates integrating Healing Touch in their practice at St. Mary's Healthcare reflect the support of our Leadership and Management throughout the institution.

- An HTCP, who is a Radiology Technician in a Family Health Center, documented 203 Healing Touch sessions to patients in the center between November 1, 2013 – October 31, 2015 as part of her practice.

Graphic Summary of Results

This graph identifies an overall stress level reduction of 73 % and a pain reduction level of 65%. The total number of Healing sessions includes 317 associates during an eight month period throughout hospital departments. The graph shows two of the major beneficial effects of Healing Touch - pain reduction and stress reduction.





- Clients in the PROS Program (Personalized Recovery Oriented Services) at St. Mary's Health-care have benefited from Healing Touch provided by a Healing Touch Certified Practitioner who is the Assistant to the Vice President of Behavioral Health. During 2014 this practitioner integrated Healing Touch into her practice and documented 45 Healing Touch client sessions in PROS, as well as 52 Healing Touch sessions for patients in the Chemical Dependency Rehabilitation Unit.

Healing Touch Experienced as a Spiritual Practice

The moments of shared connection with our associates are sacred experiences. This quality of the sacred increases as the healer matures. The focused mindfulness of the practitioner brings compassionate caring to the person in need.² The center of our Being is that sacred space within us – our heart center. We become one with each associate through compassion, caring and empathy. The intention is to be an instrument for healing, always for the client's highest good. Through therapeutic presence, compassion, heart-centeredness and a non-judgmental approach, the practitioner facilitates healing in the client/associate.

Associates have shared their experiences of grief, pain and stress. The Healing Touch connection is above all a place of trust. The associates are invited to enter the center of their Being – a place of stillness. Many Healing Touch practitioners are themselves searching for inner peace and find ways of coming home to themselves through their Healing Touch practices. It is a great joy and privilege to offer this gift to our associates with the support of all levels of leadership at our hospital.

The definition of Spirituality *"entering into relationship with oneself, others and the God of my understanding"* is meaningful in my life. I believe it is each individual's unique sense of unity of mind, body and spirit. It is my hope that our associates will continue to share this experience through Healing Touch in the Workplace and recognize it as one more avenue for coming home to inner peace, which will help to create right relationship among themselves.

Journey of Self-Care

Spirituality and self-care are intertwined. A healthy relationship with self and acknowledging the beauty of one's own divine nature increases the commitment to self-care. Many people find it can be a challenge to make time for themselves. At the conclusion of a session we offer our associates the option for daily quiet time in the form of Mindfulness Meditation and Centering Prayer. Even five minutes spent each day assists in reducing the stress in daily life. In addition, as mentioned above, we teach Healing Touch techniques for self-care.

Summary

Associate Wellness Through An Energetic Approach: Healing Touch in the Workplace has afforded five volunteers and me the opportunity to offer Healing Touch to our associates through a planned and organized approach. Healing Touch was offered to associates in twenty-nine departments with repeat sessions in three departments. One Nurse Manager requested Healing Touch for her staff on a monthly basis from the start of the program. The time frame for the program was February – July, November and December, 2014 during which time over 317 associates participated in the program. The enthusiasm of our associates reflects their deepening insights to the benefits of Healing Touch. The support of Administration and Leadership continues to be crucial.

We, as Healing Touch practitioners, will continue to bring the gift of Healing Touch to our associates. Janet Mentgen, our beloved founder of the Healing Touch Program encouraged her Healing Touch practitioners to "just do the work". We are responding to her vision by helping our associates to experience stress relief and pain reduction through Healing Touch. €

Credits and Gratitude

Healing Touch volunteers: Lillian Johnson, HTCP, Sr. Christine LaFrance, Healing Touch Practitioner Apprentice, Velice Decker, HTCP, Barbara Kramer, HTCP and Alia Khan Rehman, a Healing Touch Level 3 Student.



Data Analysis: Anthony Martin, RN, MSN, CCRN,
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2. *Healing Touch Guidebook: Practicing the Art and Science of Human Caring*. Ch. 14: "Healing Touch as a Spiritual Practice." Co-authored: Dorothea Hover-Kramer, Ed.D. , RN, D.CEP with Sr. Rita Jean DuBrey, CSJ, RN, MSN, HTCP/I, 2009.