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# Healing in Hospitals and Hospices in the United Kingdom

Angie Buxton-King

**T**he experience of personal tragedy has provided me with the will and motivation to spread the understanding that energy healing can provide a very useful support system to people struggling with health issues, specifically cancer.

My late son, Sam's, diagnosis and treatment for leukaemia (1995-1998) directly inspired me to provide a healing service at the bedside in the oncology unit.

In 1999 I was employed by University College London Hospital (UCLH) as a healer working with cancer patients as part of an integrated holistic package of care. After four years of working as a healer on the wards, I was promoted to the post of manager/healer of the complementary therapy team. My role was to lead the acceptance and development of healing and other complementary therapies within the University College London NHS Trust. In 2011, after 12 years, I left UCLH but my focus continues to be on opening doors for other healers to work within statutory settings.

My first book *The NHS Healer*, published in 2004, and my new book *Onwards and Upwards*, due for publication later this year, takes readers on a journey describing the continuing expansion of healers working in British hospitals and hospices — facilitated by my charity The Sam Buxton Sunflower

Healing Trust (SBSHT).

SBSHT was created in 2006 to provide funds to employ healers to work with cancer patients. Our model is that we donate funds directly to the hospital or hospice which then creates a position for a Reiki practitioner or spiritual healer. We are very proud to have funded over 30 healers since we began our charity's work.

In my new book, I overview the cancer journey and describe how healing supports patients and their families at every stage from diagnosis to health or passing. I am immensely proud and privileged to be able to use Michelle Petroni's artwork to illustrate the emotional impact of the cancer journey.

Working with the National Health Service (NHS) has been extremely fulfilling (when working with patients) and immensely frustrating when dealing with financial managers and human resource processes. But nothing I have experienced before or since is as fulfilling as working with someone at the bedside, delivering a therapy they would otherwise not have thought of using, seeing the wonderment in their eyes and their asking, "When are you coming back?"

Complementary therapy (healing) has come a long way in the United Kingdom since the House of Lords



report in 2000 placed energy healing in the same category as counseling, reflexology, aromatherapy and massage. The word complementary is a useful one as it means “those that can work alongside conventional medicine.”

I am keenly aware that as a charity we need to share the information gathered over the past years of placing healers in the NHS to give other healers the opportunity to develop the skills required to work safely and competently within a statutory setting. To help achieve this, we have created our unique distant learning training for healers.

healing are in place and they have helped integration. Hospitals and hospices can now be assured of a minimum level of training and can have confidence that the healers they interview will be professional and understand professional boundaries. These standards are clearly also important for volunteer healers — as all patients are vulnerable.

Working alongside conventional medicine requires a passionate and committed healer. It is not for the faint-hearted, no matter how well intentioned. A well-trained and emotionally prepared healer will be effective and happy in a post. That is good news for everyone.

### *One of the keys to the integration of healers into health-care is to be paid to be in a post.*

Our Healing in Hospitals and Hospices training helps prepare the healer for a paid post within the NHS or a hospice and includes:

- Personal preparation of the healer
- The use of common language that bridges rather than alienates
- Simple anatomy
- Infection issues
- Healing techniques to assist medical procedures
- Understanding the patient pathway and how the healer supports the patient journey
- Measuring outcomes
- Funding issues: how to gain funding and support for posts

And much, much more!

There is no doubt that applying for a funded post as a healer within a hospital or hospice does require a confident, experienced healer. Healing standards have changed a lot since I began my work at University College London Hospital in 1999. National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Reiki and spiritual

I believe one of the keys to the integration of healers into healthcare is **to be paid** to be in a post. Volunteers are generally not invited to attend multi-discipline team meetings, nursing handovers or to teach in the induction programme for new nurses and doctors. These are all great places to help integration of a healing service.

One of the questions we as trustees of our charity ask ourselves is, “Why aren’t more healers approaching hospitals and hospices?”

It is of course a challenge to approach hospitals and hospices, but with the right training, you will succeed.


The blueprint for our charity’s work is to provide funds for two days a week for a maximum of two years to enable the healer to prove a need. At the end of the two-year period, the hospital or hospice is usually keen to hold onto the service. We then work with them to provide separate ongoing funds to continue the service beyond our funding.

Our experience continues to be that money is what



will help drive the expansion of healing in healthcare, and realistically this money will have to come from outside the NHS. I, along with my fellow trustees, believe that any future cancer team should include complementary therapies in the patients' package of care, hence the work of our charity.

Our continued aim is to provide funds and support innovative projects to enable healers to work alongside conventional medicine. This, in turn, will bring about a more supportive, holistic journey for patients and their families.

So, what is stopping you from approaching a hospital or hospice? As someone once said to me, "Don't sit on your hands, use them!" 



Author Angie Buxton-King can be found at [www.CancerTherapies.org.uk](http://www.CancerTherapies.org.uk).