

The Effect of Reiki on Decreasing Episodes of Insomnia and Improving Sleep Patterns

Kimberly R. Pugh

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Birmingham, Alabama

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of Insomnia and Improving Sleep Patterns**

Dissertation

by

Kimberly R. Pugh, Ph.D., R.N.

**A Dissertation Submitted in Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of**

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**Clayton College of Natural Health
Birmingham, Alabama**

ABSTRACT

The Effect of Reiki on Decreasing Episodes of Insomnia and Improving Sleep Patterns

**Kimberly R. Pugh, Ph.D., R.N.
Clayton College of Natural Health – Commerce, 2004**

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The complementary and alternative (CAM) health movement is a burgeoning phenomenon in contemporary American culture. Types of healing alternatives to conventional medicine became increasingly popular in the latter quarter of the 20th century and some physicians, hospitals, and government entities have begun to acknowledge the fields with validity. While alternatives to conventional medicine have always existed, contemporary interest in CAM may trigger an interest in unconventional forms of energy healing such as Reiki.

The purpose of this research study was to investigate if Reiki could reduce episodes of insomnia and improve sleep patterns. Due to the fact that there is a paucity of research on Reiki's effectiveness as an insomnia treatment method, a research study consisting of 15 volunteer subjects (10 females and 5 males at least 21 years old) who suffered from having difficulty falling asleep, difficulty staying asleep, and/or poor quality of sleep. The subjects learned and practiced Reiki techniques for self-healing. To measure the subjects' experiences and responses to Reiki, each subject completed a pre-Reiki and post-Reiki "Beliefs and Attitudes about Sleep" questionnaire, a "Sleep Hygiene Analysis" questionnaire, and a "Stress and Anxiety" questionnaire. In addition, the subjects underwent pre and post Reiki interviews and vital signs assessments.

The results of this study indicate that Reiki is a beneficial therapy regimen for sleep disturbance because it decreases episodes of insomnia and improves sleep patterns. Reiki

also promotes physical/mental calmness due to a healthy, stable parasympathetic nervous system, and Reiki is an alternative technique to decrease episodes insomnia without the use of pharmaceuticals.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1 Introduction to the Problem or Issue	page 1
Background and History	
Research Questions	
Significance of Study	
Chapter 2 Review of Related Literature and Research	page 15
The Chakras	
Balancing the Chakras	
Parasympathetic Nervous System	
Reiki Research	
Chapter 3 Design of Study	page 32
Collection of data	
Interviewer Qualifications	
Selection of Subjects/Recruitment/Location	
Questionnaires and Analyses	
Data Analysis	
Chapter 4 Results and Findings	page 42
Case Studies of 15 Subjects	
Findings	
Chapter 5 Conclusions, Implications, & Recommendations for Future Research	page 54
Appendix A The Seven Chakras	page 59
Appendix B Reiki Hand Positions	page 61
Appendix C Questionnaires, Analysis, and Interview Questions	page 67
Appendix D Participation Letter	page 72
References	page 74
Vita	page 78

Chapter 1:

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM OR ISSUE

This study explored the effect of Reiki on the parasympathetic nervous system to reduce episodes of insomnia and improve sleep patterns. This study also discussed the evidence that supports the use of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) as well as particular mind-body interventions to promote health care. The practice and use of CAM is increasing as many people explore various unconventional techniques to treat health problems.

Complementary medicine refers to a group of therapeutic and diagnostic disciplines that exists largely outside the institutions where conventional health care is taught and provided. In the 1970's and 1980's these disciplines were mainly provided an alternative to conventional health care and hence became known collectively as “alternative medicine.” (Zollman & Vickers, 1999).

Insomnia is the chronic inability to fall asleep or remain asleep for an adequate length of time (Dorland, 2003). There are three types of insomnia, conditioned insomnia, insomnia associated with clinical disorders, and circadian insomnia (Schenck, 2003). Conditioned insomnia is psychophysiological and arises from an episode of acute situational insomnia triggered by pain, illness, medication, stress, travel, or bereavement. The individual with conditioned insomnia associates the bed with not sleeping and becomes hyperaroused at night at a time when he/she would ordinarily feel relaxed and sleepy. Insomnia associated with clinical disorders is very common in psychiatric, particularly mood and anxiety disorders. Medical disorders and treatment most commonly associated with insomnia include asthma,

chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, congestive heart disease, gastroesophageal reflux, rheumatologic or other pain-related disorders, hyperthyroidism, end-stage renal disease, and neurodegenerative disorders (Schenck, 2003). Circadian rhythm sleep disorders result from a mismatch between the endogenous sleep and alertness rhythm and the desired (or required) time for sleep and wake (Schenck 2003).

Forty-eight percent of Americans report occasional insomnia and 22% experience insomnia every night (National Institutes of Health, 2002). Women are 1.3 times more likely to experience insomnia than men, approximately 4% of Americans use prescriptions to help them sleep, and more than 50% of insomnia cases are related to depression, anxiety, or psychological distress (Schenck, 2003). Furthermore, over 60 million Americans each year suffer from insomnia and have one or more of the following: (1) Difficulty falling asleep, (2) Waking up often during the night, (3) Waking up too early in the morning, and (4) Unrestful sleep. Overall, insomnia is the result of physiological and psychological repressions on the mind-body process (National Institutes of Health, 2002).

The cause of insomnia, stress, occurs in the autonomic nervous system (ANS) and is triggered by a variety of symptoms such as illness, life situations, and environmental factors. Treatment for insomnia is another problematic and controversial issue. The use of benzodiazepines to treat insomnia causes many adverse side effects such as confusion, bizarre behavior, and amnesia (Holbrook, 2000). The condition of insomnia as well as the treatment for insomnia creates more long-term health care problems such as difficulty concentrating, memory impairment, decreased motivation, decreased productivity, irritability,

interpersonal difficulty, increased worrying, increased anxiety, endocrine dysregulation with impaired ability to maintain weight control, heart disease, and depression (Schenck, 2003).

During the past 30 years, there has been a powerful scientific movement to explore the mind's capacity to affect the body and to rediscover the ways in which it permeates and is affected by all the body's functions. This movement has been spurred by the rise in incidence of chronic illness, including heart disease, cancer, depression, arthritis, and asthma. The prevalence, destructiveness, and cost of the illnesses have set the stage for exploration of therapies that can help individuals appreciate the sources of their stress and reduce the stress by quieting the mind and using it to mobilize the body to heal itself. During recent time, medical researchers have discovered other cultures' healing systems, such as meditation, yoga, and Tai Chi, which were grounded in an understanding of the power of mind and body to affect one another; developed techniques such as biofeedback and visual imagery, which are capable of facilitating the mind's capacity to affect the body; and examined some of the specific links between mental processes, autonomic, immune, and nervous system functioning (Achterberg, 1992).

The mind/body model focuses on how the mind and body interact. The mind/body model emphasizes that beliefs influence health and well-being. It explains how stress, negative effects of life pressures, and events can become chronic or excessive, causing distress or a toll on the mind and body (Benson & Stuart, 1992). This distress can lead to physiological changes such as insomnia. There is no standard definition for insomnia since the amount of sleep required for feeling rested varies widely among individuals; however, arbitrary definitions of

insomnia are sleep-onset insomnia or difficulty falling asleep defined by an average of at least thirty minutes per night to fall asleep and sleep maintenance insomnia or difficulty staying asleep as defined by an average awake time after falling asleep totaling more than thirty minutes a night or awakening before the desired wake-up time with an inability to fall back asleep, and poor quality of sleep (Benson & Stuart, 1992). The effect of sleep loss has a phenomenal affect on the central nervous system (CNS) causing frustration, aggravation, loss of memory, and vast changes with the other physiological system. Several decades of research suggests that psychological factors from emotional states such as depression, behavioral disposition, such as hostility, and psychological stress can directly influence both physiologic functions and health outcomes (Astin, 2003).

Background and History

Biofield therapeutics, discovered between 2,500 and 5,000 years ago, is one of the oldest forms of healing known to humankind (Rubik, 1992). Discovery, partial characterization, and use of the biofield therapy have risen independently among peoples and cultures in every sector of the world. The earliest Western references are in hieroglyphics and indepicions of biofield healing dating from the Egypt's third Dynasty (Rubik, 1992). The living body, human or animal, radiates warmth and energy. This energy is the life force itself, and has as many names as there are human civilizations. The Polynesian Hunas call this healing force Mana, and the Native American Iroquois people call it Orenda. It is known as Prana in India, Ruach in word it is from Hebrew, Barraka in the Islamic countries, and Chi in China. In Japan the energy is termed Ki and it is from this word that Reiki is named (Stein, 1995).

Energy therapies have been a useful aid in improving health and well-being. Energy medicine is any interpersonal, nonpharmacological intervention that brings about changes in heat, cold, congestion, circulation, or sensory processes. The presence and/or hands of the therapist initiates an alternative in heat, cold, or congestion and act in altering the client's experience of pain or other ailments that might deal with circulation (Guthrie & Gamble, 2001). The hands are considered to be the physician's greatest and most important diagnostic and therapeutic tool. Touch and healing with the hands have been used in health care and medical practice since the beginning of medical care. Massage therapy, chiropractic medicine, and reflexology are all examples of how the hands are used to heal (Archterberg, 1992).

Reiki is the laying on of hands touch healing system of incomparable ease and power. The origin of Reiki began with Mikao Usui, who was a principal of the Doshisha University in

Kyoto, Japan and also a Christian minister. After being asked by his students to be shown the method by which Jesus did healing, Usui began a ten-year quest to find and learn the skill. When Christian authorities in Japan told him that this healing was not talked about, much less known, Usui sought the information through Buddhism. There are striking resemblances between the life of Buddha in India (Gautama Siddhartha, 620-542 BC) and the life of the historical Jesus. Usui was told by Buddhist monks that the ancient spiritual healing methods since Reiki had been lost, and that the only way to approach the, was by entering the Buddhist teachings, the Path to Enlightenment (Stein, 1995).

The Buddha's discovery of the Path to Enlightenment made possible the enlightenment of others. A number of buddhas followed Gautama Siddhartha. Buddha and several of the buddhas who followed him were called the "Great Physicians" (as Jesus was later called). So much emphasis was placed on healing, both spiritual and physical, in early Buddhist practice that it became the norm to later discourage it as a distraction from the Enlightenment Path. What today is called Reiki was known in India from the time of Gautama Siddhartha. It was partly described in the Buddhist sutras (holy books), but more likely it was transmitted through oral teaching. Several of the early Buddhist scriptures describe the effects of spiritual healing and freedom from suffering (Stein, 1995).

Mikao Usui eventually took residence in a Zen Buddhist monastery where he found the text describing the healing formula, which he was able to read in their original Sanskrit. The material however did not include information on how to activate the energy and make it work. The sutras intentionally left this information out to keep such powerful information from hands

not ready to know and use properly. Usui's quest to discover the healing method continued through an intense three-week period of meditation, fasting, and prayer on Mt. Koriyama in Japan. Usui was willing to accept whatever answer he received through meditation even if it resulted in his death. During his long period of meditation he visualized the Reiki symbols and was given information about each symbol to activate the healing energy. The experience was the first Reiki attunement and the psychic rediscovery of an ancient method. Mikao Usui left Mt. Koriyama knowing how to heal as Buddha and Jesus. Usui named the healing energy Reiki, meaning universal life force energy. Reiki therapy utilizes spiritual or universal energy to assist the healing process. The healing can occur on physical, emotional, and spiritual levels (Stein, 1995).

Reiki links the interrelationship of the psyche and the body. When someone is treated with Reiki, he or she is brought into a state of unity with the harmony of the universe. This harmony is able to reach the smallest cells, make him/her whole and healthy again, thus encouraging the natural ability of a patient to heal himself. Reiki supports the body's natural ability to heal itself, vitalizes both body and soul, re-establishes spiritual equilibrium and mental well-being, functions on all levels, whether mental, spiritual, or emotional to balance the body's energies, loosens up blocked energy and promotes a state of total relaxation, and cleanses the body of poisons (Baginski & Sharamon, 1998).

Usui traditional Reiki, also called Usui Reiki Ryoho, teaches Reiki in three degrees with Reiki III as the Master/ Teacher's training. Reiki is sometimes divided with the third level divided in to two levels consisting of Reiki III practitioner and the Reiki III

teaching degree. Some call the Reiki III practitioner's degree an advanced Reiki II. One system called Radiance divides the Reiki training into eleven degrees. Teaching methods within the degrees also vary. Most teach Reiki I in the same manner. The greatest variance come with Reiki III, however, with differences in the method of passing attunements. The traditional attunement/initiation method requires four attunements each for Reiki I and some teachers use four for Reiki II. Reiki practice and therapy are completely safe and noninvasive. During the treatment the practitioner places his hands in specific positions on or above the patient's body and the patient experiences relaxation, peacefulness, and warmth. The treatment lasts approximately 15-60 minutes. Reiki treatment can be performed from a distance as well (Stein, 1995).

Reiki Research Questions

Does Reiki have a positive effect on the parasympathetic nervous system?

Does Reiki reduce episodes of insomnia?

Does Reiki improve sleep patterns?

Does Reiki relieve anxiety?

Does Reiki decrease stress and anxiety?

Does Reiki cause a calming effect on the mind and body?

Significance of the Study

This study demonstrates how the holistic practice of Reiki can positively affect the parasympathetic nervous system, thus decreasing episodes of insomnia and improving sleep patterns. The significance of this study is that more individuals are turning to holistic therapies to alleviate stress and treat physical and mental ailments. Holistic therapies, such as Reiki may be instrumental in alleviating insomnia. Holistic therapies are unconventional health care treatments such as acupuncture, homeopathy, herbal therapy, energy healing, art/music therapy, massage, and spiritual healing. Holistic therapies are becoming more popular because patients are dissatisfied with conventional treatment because it has been ineffective, has produced adverse effects, is seen as impersonal, is too technologically oriented, and is too costly, patients believe that holistic therapies are less authoritarian and more empowering by offering them more personal autonomy and control over their health care decisions, and patients see holistic therapies as being more compatible with their values, worldwide spiritual/religious philosophy or beliefs regarding the nature and meaning of illness (Astin, 1998).

There has been a theoretical basis for the validity of Reiki and there is an increasing body of evidence to demonstrate the existence and flow of Reiki through the physical body. Physics has always held that those phenomena which are not forbidden by the laws of physics can exist. Quantum physics extends this assertion by demonstrating that light can be either a particle phenomenon or a wave phenomenon according to the nature of the experience and the state of mind of the observer. Western physics has always noted the flow of electricity in the human body and demonstrated its variations through electrocardiogram (EKG) and

electroencephalogram (EEG) tracings. The brain waves and heart waves have been invaluable in the practice of medicine. In addition to the use of x-rays, medical research has popularized the use of computed axial tomography (CAT) scans, positron emission tomography (PET) scans, and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scans, all of which utilize detection of energy flows within the body as diagnostic aids. Kirlian photography has been able to show the human energy field(s). The hands of healers have been photographed, before, during, and after treatment. The flow of Reiki has also been shown using Kirlian photography (Snellgrove, 1996).

Emerging evidence during the past several decades suggests that psychological factors can directly influence the mind-body process. The mind-body process could perhaps be regarded as an overall process that is not easily dissected into separate and distinct components or parts. Mind-body relations are always mutual and bi-directional- the body affects the mind and is affected by it (Achterberg, 1992). Further evidence within the past several decades suggests that psychosocial factors from emotional states such as depression, behavioral disposition, such as hostility, and psychological stress can directly influence both physiologic functions and health outcomes. Research in the fields of psychology, oncology, immunology, and cardiology has shown that the reduction of stress has immediate important positive effects on the immune system and cell changes as well as the avoidance of pathology and mental dysfunction (Astin, 2003). This is significant to this research since stress, pain, and anxiety in energy induced reactions that have been noted cause insomnia.

Definition of Terms

Autonomic Nervous System (ANS) - The part of the nervous that regulates involuntary body functions, controlling many organs and muscles within the body.

Benzodiazepines - Medicines that help relieve nervousness, tension, and other symptoms by slowing the central nervous system.

Chakras - Energy centers that are openings for life energy to flow into and out of our aura. Their function is to vitalize the physical body to bring about development of our self-consciousness.

Circadian - Pertaining to a period of about 24 hours; applied especially to the rhythmic repetition of certain phenomena in living organisms at about the same time each day (circadian rhythm).

Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) - Includes a cadre of practices such as the use of vitamin/minerals combinations, herbal supplements, acupuncture, therapeutic touch, imagery, and other practices that may or may not have been tested for safety and efficacy.

Computed Axial Tomography (CAT) – A process of using digital processing to generate a three-dimensional image of internals of an object from a series of two-dimensional x-ray images.

Electrocardiogram (EKG) - An electrical recording of the heart used in the investigation of heart disease.

Electroencephalogram (EEG)- A test to detect abnormalities in the electrical activity of the brain.

Energy - Inherent powers or potential force.

Endocrine System - Organs and structures whose function is to secrete into the blood or lymph a substance (hormone) that has a specific effect on another organ or part.

Hematocrit - The red coloring matter of the red blood corpuscle carrying oxygen from the lungs to the tissues.

Homeostasis - A tendency to stability in the normal body states (internal environment).

Hemoglobin - The percentage of whole blood that is comprised of red blood cells.

Holistic therapy - Complementary and alternative medicine therapies for the treatment of the mind, spirit, and body.

Insomnia - A sleep disorder characterized by difficulty initiating or maintaining sleep for at least one month.

Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) - An imaging method used by radiologists to view internal body structures using a combination of radiowaves and magnetic fields.

Meridians - Paths through which energy flows through the body.

Mind-Body Interventions - Treatments for physical symptoms that relax the mind and calm the body.

Parasympathetic Nervous System - Part of the nervous system that works to save energy by decreasing the blood pressure, decreasing heart rate, and calming the body.

Positron Emission Tomography (PET) - Diagnostic examination that involves the acquisition of physiologic images based on the detection of positrons.

Reiki - Japanese term for “universal life force energy.” A term that describes an energy system of healing and spiritual development.

Stress - A physical, emotional, or chemical factor to which an individual fails to make a satisfactory adaptation, which causes physiologic tension, a contributing factor of disease.

Sympathetic Nervous System - Part of the nervous system that works to allow the body to deal with stressful situations. When danger is perceived it will tense up our musculature, constrict our blood vessels, and speeds up thinking.

Therapeutic Touch - A method in which the hands are used to direct human energies in order to help heal.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND RESEARCH

Insomnia can be described as a negative health care outcome resulting from a disturbance with the mind-body process. The root of insomnia is stress, which is triggered by a variety of situations such as illness, life situations, and environmental factors. Stress is literally a nervous reaction. It occurs within the autonomic nervous system (ANS). The ANS is a vast network of nerves branching out from the spinal cord, reaching and directly affecting every organ in the body. It is responsible for maintaining the equilibrium of our internal environment. The ANS divides into two distinct systems: the sympathetic nervous system and the parasympathetic nervous system. The sympathetic nervous system allows us deal with stressful situations. Whenever we perceive danger it will tense our musculature, constrict our blood vessels and speed up our thinking process. Then after the danger has passed the parasympathetic nervous system will take over, decreasing heartbeat and relaxing blood vessels. The parasympathetic nervous system takes control and restores peace of mind and well-being (Sands, 2002).

There are a variety of holistic therapies aimed at strengthening the parasympathetic nervous system so that internal harmony is maintained. Holistic therapies are aimed at restoring the nervous system and creating peace of mind as well as well-being. By 1997 over 42% of Americans were using CAM (Astin, 1998). The most frequently used alternative to conventional medicine is relaxation techniques. Facilitated by the globalization of information and resources, increasing numbers of patients are using complementary and alternative medicine CAM to satisfy their personal health needs (Astin, 1998).

As abundant and diverse as the people of the world, CAM practices encompass healing arts such as the use of herbals and other biologicals, acupuncture, chiropractic manipulation, fields of mind-body medicine, and many more (Strauss, 2000). Complementary therapies work to release blockages and restore energy flow and health. Acupuncturists use needles, chiropractors use manipulation, and healers do it with their hands. The use of acupuncture, chiropractic medicine, and biofield therapy (such as Reiki) all relate to releasing blocked energy within the body. According to Eastern medicine systems, meridians are the energy pathways or transportation systems that connect and integrate the whole body (Donnelly, 2002). The chakras are seven energy centers of which our consciousness and our energy. These chakras, or energy centers, function as pumps or valves, regulating the flow of energy system. Chakras are found on the major meridians and act as energy stations (Brofman, 2003). The electromagnetic frequency measurements recorded at each chakra vary in oscillations from 100 to 1,600 cycles per second in a physically, mentally, and spiritually healthy person. In an extremely ill person, there may be little oscillation detected at one or more of the chakra sites. When the chakras are out of balance this signifies an unhealthy person (Donnelly, 2002).

The Chakras

The functioning of the chakras reflect decisions one makes concerning how one chooses to respond to conditions in our life. The chakras are not physical. They are aspects of consciousness. The chakras interact with the physical body through the two major vehicles, the endocrine system and the nervous system. Each of the seven chakras is associated with one of the seven endocrine glands, and also with a group of nerves called a plexus. Each chakra can be associated with particular parts of the body and particular functions within the body controlled by that plexus or that endocrine gland associated with that chakra (Brofman, 2003). Appendix A shows a diagram of the seven chakras as described by Myss (1996).

The first chakra or the root chakra is the “Security Center.” It is located at the perineum, the point between the anus and the sex organs. The endocrine gland associated with the root chakra is the adrenal gland. Parts of the body affected by the energy of the root chakra are the lymph system, skeleton system, the prostate gland, the sacral plexus, the bladder and elimination system and lower extremities. On the level of consciousness, the root chakra has influence on security, survival, trust, the relationship with money, home, and job. It also affects the ability to be grounded, to be present in the here and now as well as the ability to allow one’s self to be nourished, in the sense of allowing one’s “Inner Being” to be satisfied (Brofman, 2003).

The first chakra, the tribal power, is located at the base of the spine (at the coccyx). The energy content of the first chakra centers on group identity, group force, and a sense of belonging to a group of people. The energy of the first chakra is connected to the physical body affects the spinal column, rectum, legs, feet, bones, and the immune system. The first chakra is