

Department of Medicine
Division of Allergy & Clinical Immunology

Campus Box B164 School of Medicine
4200 East Ninth Avenue
Denver, Colorado 80262
(303) 270-7601
FAX (303) 270-7642

Date: July 6, 1994

To: Vincent Fulginiti, M.D., Chancellor, UCHSC

From: Henry N. Claman, Chair, Committee on Therapeutic Touch

Re: Report of the Chancellor's Committee on Therapeutic Touch (CCTT)

On the advice of the Academic Relevance Committee, Chancellor Fulginiti appointed a committee on Therapeutic Touch (referred to as TT). This committee is composed of:

- Robert Freedman, M.D., Professor of Psychiatry, UCHSC, Denver, CO
- David Quissell, Ph.D., Professor and Chair, Dept. of Basic Sciences & Oral Research, School of Dentistry, UCHSC, Denver, CO
- Joan Fowler-Shaver, Ph.D., R.N., Professor & Chairperson, Dept. of Physiological Nursing, University of Washington, Seattle, WA
- Ora Lea Strickland, Ph.D., Independence Foundation Research Chair and Professor, Nell Hodgson Woodruff School of Nursing, Emory University, Atlanta, GA
- Henry N. Claman, M.D., Distinguished Professor of Medicine and Immunology, UCHSC, Denver, **Chair**

Dr. Fulginiti asked the TT Committee to consider the role of TT in the curriculum of the Center for Human Caring (CHC), School of Nursing (SN), UCHSC and the rationale for the practice and theory of TT.

The TT Committee, in whole or in part, met with:

- Chancellor Vincent Fulginiti, M.D.
- Janet Quinn, Ph.D., R.N., FAAN, Associate Professor of Nursing, CHC, UCHSC
- Jean Watson, Ph.D., R.N., FAAN, Distinguished Professor of Nursing, CHC, UCHSC
- Clair E. Martin, Ph.D., Dean, School of Nursing, UCHSC
- Representatives of the Rocky Mountain Skeptics and other skeptical members of the public.

The TT Committee reviewed the set of 3 videotapes featuring Dr. Janet Quinn and produced under the auspices of the National League of Nursing.

The TT Committee held an open meeting in April, 1994; 42 people attended and 14 people spoke about TT.

TT Committee members received letters, telephone calls, reprints, books and brochures from the TT practitioners (SN) as well as from other sources across the U.S.

The meetings of the TT Committee occurred between January and June, 1994. This report was produced during May and June, 1994.

Introduction

TT is a method that purports to use the hands to help or to heal. It is a derivative of the laying on of hands. In the variety of TT used and taught at the CHC, SON, UCHSC, the practitioner's hands do not touch the patient or client. This has been called Non-Contact TT and it is the only form of TT that is considered in this report. TT is practiced by faculty members at the SON, as well as by nurses, physicians and others in the community at large, in Colorado and elsewhere. TT is taught in elective courses at the SON, and students there have written Ph.D. theses which primarily use or investigate TT. Some investigative work on TT has been done at the SON.

It is fair to say that both the theory and the practice of TT are controversial. TT is not a generally-accepted healing modality. There is disagreement about its efficacy both within and outside the Nursing profession. There are firm believers in the efficacy of TT as it is practiced as well as firm skeptics who question the validity of both the theory and the practice of TT. There is a significant but not extensive amount of literature — scientific, lay press, news media, etc. — which describes in detail both support of and non-belief in TT.

In considering as many aspects as time permitted, the TT Committee made the following comments.

A Academic Freedom

The teaching of Therapeutic Touch (TT) is an academic activity of the School of Nursing that is protected and regulated by Article X of the Laws of the Regents, as outlined in the 1988 Faculty Handbook of the University of Colorado. The Handbook makes clear that the educational aims of the University "can only be achieved in that atmosphere of free inquiry and discussion which has become a tradition of universities and is called academic freedom. For this purpose,

academic freedom is defined as the freedom to inquire, discover, publish, and teach truth as the faculty member sees it . . ." The Regents' Law thus puts the primary determination of what should be taught onto the individual faculty member. In this case, the decision of several faculty members of the School of Nursing to teach TT is clearly within the academic freedom given by the Regents to University members.

As the choice of what to teach is defined as a freedom, the limitations on this freedom must be narrowly interpreted. In the case of academic freedom, the Regents state that it is "subject to no control or authority, save the control or authority of the rational methods by which truth is established." This committee found that the scientific rationale for TT is not established and indeed can be questioned in several areas. However, the committee also found that the faculty members currently teaching TT have participated in empirical research on TT. Therefore, we conclude that the requirement of control or authority of rational methods has been met by these faculty.

The Faculty Handbook further states that: "The fullest exposure to conflicting opinions is the best insurance against error." The creation of the intellectual setting in which teaching occurs is not the prerogative of an individual faculty member, but it is a responsibility which has been clearly delegated in the Faculty Handbook to departmental chairs (Regent Action 12/20/84, Faculty Handbook, pgs. I-22 - I-23). The responsibility of the leadership of the School of Nursing to set the teaching of TT within the appropriate scholarly framework, in which the conflict of evidence and opinion is clearly delineated, is described in a subsequent section. A second related duty of the SON faculty stems from the use of TT in the clinical care mission of the School. The SON faculty's duty is to ensure that TT is good clinical care and to fully inform patients of the nature of TT, so that each can make an informed consent to the procedure, is also described in a subsequent section.

A final duty, which the Regents have relegated to the members of the University as a whole, is the duty to protect the scholarly efforts of faculty members from "direct or indirect pressures or interference from within the University, and the University will resist to the utmost such pressures or interference when exerted from without." The committee recognizes that the University of Colorado is a public institution and, as such, that scholarly and teaching activities of faculty members should be fully disclosed to members of the public, including their Regental and legislative representatives. Furthermore, it is appropriate that Regents, legislators, and members of the general public should freely comment on scholarly and teaching activities of faculty members. However, the protection of academic freedom by the University, as specified by the Regents, requires that the process of public debate not become one of interference or pressure on the scholarly activities of faculty members, to the extent that these activities are protected by academic freedom. Therefore, the

creation of special committees to respond to public criticism of activities such as the teaching of TT should not be used as the instrument of interference or pressure. This committee thus wishes to make explicit that the teaching of TT is protected by the academic freedom set forth by the Regents. Furthermore, the regularly constituted bodies within the School of Nursing that review curriculum content and clinical practice are fully adequate to perform these functions, without interference or pressure from within or without the University.

B Curriculum Evaluation

Within the academic milieu it is expected that educational programs be evaluated in a consistent ongoing manner. It is the responsibility of the faculty and program administrators to develop and implement an evaluation plan that informs them and other program audiences about program inputs, processes and outcomes to aid in decision-making regarding the overall effectiveness of the program and its curriculum, the program's policies and procedures, and resource needs and utilization.

The TT Committee has determined that the Chancellor of the UCHSC at Denver has appropriately implemented University-level review of the Center for Human Caring and the members of the TT component of the curriculum. The School of Nursing has implemented appropriate evaluation of the TT component of the nursing curriculum by receiving ongoing evaluations of courses and faculty review of course syllabi. The School of Nursing programs also have been thoroughly reviewed externally by the National League for Nursing and received national accreditation. There is currently no evidence available to indicate that the TT component of the program should be discontinued based on evaluation data. However, when programs are under development or are of a nontraditional nature, it is the responsibility of the faculty and school administrators to implement more intensive evaluation strategies which involve the review of external experts in the field (see recommendations).

C Public Representation of Therapeutic Touch

Issue

The representation of TT within the scientific community is fledgling with few sustained programs of research. The majority of support for TT as a nursing therapeutic emanates from clinical efficacy observations by practitioners. Since the scientific basis for this therapy has yet to be substantially developed, it is important that it is being represented appropriately and accurately and

that false claims or misleading statements are not made in the marketing and representation of courses of study at the University of Colorado.

Evaluation

The Committee evaluated the brochure, "Therapeutic Touch at the Center for Human Caring." In general, the claims made in the brochure are fair and adequate. Key claims noted include the following:

1. TT is a derivative of the laying on of hands but differs in that a religious context is not part of the representation and it is a skill that can be learned and taught.
2. TT is taught in an estimated 80 colleges and schools of nursing.
3. TT "may" decrease pain, decrease the amount of pain medicine people need, induce profound relaxation, and accelerate wound healing.
4. Our understanding of how and why TT works is incomplete and the underlying theory of a human energy field remains to be demonstrated using traditional Western science.
5. Attempting to cure disease is not part of the view.
6. Natural processes for healing are stimulated.
7. There is no way to know what specific effects TT will have for an individual.
8. TT complements rather than replaces regular medical and nursing care.
9. There is no preconceived dose (# of treatments) over time and each treatment takes about 10-15 minutes.
10. TT is embedded in clarifying goals for health, exploring meanings of health problems and learning self-care.
11. The process for the therapist is to become calm, enter her/himself with the intention to assist healing and perform movements believed to allow interaction with an energy field.

No clearly misleading statements are made in the brochure. However, because of the thin scientific basis for claiming efficacy or mechanism, a rewording for claim #3 (above) is suggested; e.g., "Although not completely proven, over 20 years of clinical experience and research suggests that in certain contexts, TT might reduce pain and the amount of needed pain medication, perhaps improve wound healing and very often induce profound relaxation."

Under brochure section "*Can TT cure my disease?*", and in relation to claim #6, since the "natural processes" are unspecified, it is recommended that wording of sentence #2 in this paragraph be something like: "The focus for TT is on healing, defined as stimulating wholeness of body, mind and spirit."

Under the brochure section "*What happens in a TT session?*", and its relation to claim #11, since the mechanism is uncertain, omit from second last sentence of

this section "which we believe allow her to interact with energy field" or substitute with "which promotes healing" or a less specific statement.

A question regarding claim #2 is how or where this is documented; i.e., 80 colleges and schools of nursing. The recommendation is to omit or refer to the proper source.

In sum, this brochure with suggested changes will convey the historical grounding for TT, the tentative research outcomes, and the lack of theoretical substantiation. It will also disavow replacement of conventional therapy, make no promises regarding individual response and generally explain the process. Thereby, the brochure can represent the reality of what is known about the phenomenon and is not deemed to constitute misrepresentation.

D The Efficacy of Therapeutic Touch

There is disagreement about whether TT is effective. To date, there is not a sufficient body of data, both in quality and quantity, to establish TT as a unique and efficacious healing modality. There are major gaps in the literature regarding the actual efficacy of the practice of non-contact TT as a unique healing modality. This lack of data and consequently the perceived uncertainties of TT's possible unique beneficial attributes in the practice of the healing arts greatly compromise the general acceptance of TT and brings the potential to have a negative effect on the stature and reputation of the School of Nursing. Qualitative judgments and evaluation are not sufficient to document and establish TT as an efficacious therapeutic or healing modality. The development of verifiable data is essential if TT is to be accepted in the health sciences community. If an effect is observable, it can be measured. It is not adequate to state that TT involves mechanisms which exist beyond the five senses and which therefore cannot be proven by ordinary methods. Such comments are a disservice to science and the practice of healing and demonstrate a commitment to metaphysics and the mystical view of life rather than to a scientific or rational view of life. Therefore, it is not surprising that TT is looked upon by many individuals within and outside the community with concern and disbelief. It is inappropriate in the context of a health science center to teach and practice TT for another 20 years in the absence of validation of TT as an efficacious healing modality. As private practitioners are unlikely to undertake controlled studies, it is the academic practitioners of TT who have the obligation and responsibility to the community to critically assess TT. Studies of TT as an empirical phenomenon, if they are to be performed adequately, may require a critical mass of skilled individuals with academic expertise in different areas of both the social, nursing and medical sciences.

From our study and analysis, it has become quite clear that the University of Colorado School of Nursing has a unique opportunity and responsibility to provide to the health sciences community a greater understanding of the actual nature and efficacy of TT. The School of Nursing has established itself as one of the major nursing schools in the country where TT is being practiced and taught as an effective alternative healing modality. TT has become an important academic component of the Center for Human Caring. Nonetheless, the critical evaluation of TT and the establishment of its efficacy as a unique healing modality has not been emphasized to the same extent as its practice and the training of new TT practitioners.

E The Scientific Basis for Therapeutic Touch

The primary scientific explanation for the possible efficacy of TT is based on the concept of personal energy fields. TT proponents believe that each person is and/or has an energy field which extends beyond the edges of the physical body. This concept can be found in Oriental lore but TT proponents trace it mainly to Dr. Martha Rogers of N.Y.U. Her metaphor that a person is an energy field has been made concrete by TT practitioners who believe a) that this energy field can be perceived by trained TT practitioners; b) that it is perturbed (or "imbalanced" or "congested") in people who need healing; c) that practitioners of TT can modify this energy field by passing their hands over the body repeatedly; and d) that such changing of the energy field will promote relaxation, healing and well-being.

Although TT practitioners state that the existence and nature of the energy field is an hypothesis which has not been confirmed in over 20 years, in practice they behave as if the energy field were a perceptible reality.

There is virtually no acceptable scientific evidence concerning the existence or nature of these energy fields. There is no ongoing research on this concept at the Center for Human Caring, nor are there any plans for such research, nor even any ideas about how such research might be conducted. In view of these facts, the Committee believes that assertions about the existence and modification of energy fields as the possible scientific basis of the teaching and practice of TT are premature.

F Summary

In terms of UCHSC School of nursing faculty teaching, research and practice scholarship incorporating TT, the committee determined that in the main, this involves two faculty who have TT as their major scholarship domain and two elective courses within the curriculum of the School. The faculty involved have

engaged in some empirically-based research in this domain which, as with virtually all intervention research, can be criticized for its incompleteness and methodological flaws. It was deemed by the Committee that the domain of TT and the teaching and research done by members of the faculty is protected by Article X of the Laws of the Regents of the U of C, guaranteeing faculty the academic freedom to pursue worthy scholarship (see Section A). Further, the faculty within the School of Nursing have subjected this domain of scholarship to the same evaluation process as the remaining domains of the curriculum which was deemed by the Committee in accordance with usual curricular quality control (see Section B). A public document through which potential therapists and recipients are informed of the practice of TT was analyzed and it was determined that no misrepresentations of the phenomenon existed in the document (see Section C).

G Recommendations

1. The need for external input.

As the TT program appears to be operating in settings which are somewhat isolated from other biomedical disciplines, the Committee believes that there is a need for cross-disciplinary input relative to approaches to teaching and research. Many academic programs have standing external review or advisory boards or committees, and this should be considered for TT. In the case of TT, representatives from the social as well as the health sciences should be useful.

2. Research approaches for TT.

In the field of TT as a whole, there is an urgent need for:

- a. Information concerning the scientific basis of TT in terms of the existence, nature and modulation of a personal energy field.
- b. Information concerning the efficacy of TT as an adjunct to healing, in comparison to other options such as no treatment or placebo TT or another form of relaxation or biofeedback, etc.

Faculty in the School of Nursing should decide if research in TT is to be part of its widely-promulgated program of TT. This Committee believes that research into the scientific basis and the practical efficacy of TT is highly desirable and that the UCHSC SON is a logical place for this research effort. Proponents of TT need to reach beyond their own practices to develop true interdisciplinary approaches to understanding TT. In such endeavors, it is highly desirable to use, as much as possible,

quantitative methods rather than relying heavily on descriptive phenomenology.

In terms of the underlying scientific basis of TT, i.e. energy fields, TT proponents need to collaborate with engineers and biophysicians, perhaps with experts in biofeedback, autonomic physiology and electrophysiology to seek empirical validation.

In terms of establishing the efficacy of TT as a healing modality according to accepted methods used in other fields, the following items come to mind.

- Approaches to assessment of outcome could be developed in collaboration with the UCHSC Center for Health Services Research. This center is an acknowledged leader in the field of outcomes research. Such collaboration could aid in the design of studies, in decisions as to which clinical situations should be explored and which control groups might be used (e.g. TT vs. no treatment, vs. placebo, vs. another relaxation modality, etc.), and which methods of assessment are best.
- If TT is as dramatically helpful in reducing post-traumatic pain and inflammation as is claimed in anecdotal reports, interdisciplinary studies could be carried out in collaboration with:
 - a. UCHSC pain clinics which study chronic pain.
 - b. The Dept. of Obstetrics & Gynecology, which operates a clinic for women with chronic pelvic pain.
 - c. The Dept. of Emergency Medicine and/or the Dept. of Orthopedics for the study of the reduction of post-traumatic pain or inflammation.
- If TT is effective in helping to relieve stress and fatigue, there is an internationally recognized program in Chronic Fatigue Syndrome studies at the National Jewish Center here in Denver, where patients are eager to find relief for their problems.

It is not difficult to think of other collaborative situations in which SON faculty which practice TT could fruitfully interact with other health science disciplines.

3. Teaching and practice of TT.

TT is potentially a source of considerable income. Training in TT is not complex and arduous and the practice of TT does not require a large investment in equipment or personnel.

The Chancellor should recommend to the Dean of the School of Nursing that the Faculty of the School of Nursing ensure:

- that the proper type of informed consent be obtained from patients prior to TT, i.e. consent for standard treatment vs. consent for research.
- that TT practice represents good nursing practice. A special concern is that the TT program avoid as much as possible being perceived as a New Age cult procedure.
- that proper academic standards be maintained for courses and degree requirements in the teaching of TT.
- that public representation of TT and their promotion of TT practice in brochures, videotapes, etc., be accurate.
- that adequate formal records of treatment and reimbursements be kept.

With these considerations in mind, the Committee believes that the School of Nursing could establish Therapeutic Touch as a beneficial adjunct treatment to work along with regular medical and nursing care.