

Therapeutic Touch

**An information sheet from the Kentucky Council Against Health Fraud
www.kcahf.org**

Overview

Therapeutic touch (TT) (sometimes called “healing touch”) is usually used to refer to a method that *does not actually involve touching* the patient. Created by Dolores Krieger, RN, PhD, and Dora Kunz, a psychic “sensitive,” with roots in the religions of Theosophy and Hinduism, as well as in the pseudoscientific philosophy of Martha Rogers. Practiced by many nurses. The practitioner moves hands near the patient to assess imbalances in alleged “energy fields,” then carries out “unruffling” movements to smooth out the fields and clear out “blockages” and “congestion.” Healing energy is allegedly transmitted to correct imbalances.

Scientific assessment

Therapeutic touch is *inconsistent with scientific knowledge*. There is no such thing as a human “energy field” as envisioned by TT practitioners. Science has the ability to detect incredibly small amounts of energy, far smaller than anyone could detect through any human senses, yet there is no evidence for such a field.

Numerous other questions arise. How could someone detect the alleged “energy field” with their hands? How could they manipulate it? How could changes in the field influence health? There are no known or imaginable anatomical structures that could be involved in such things. There is no plausible explanation of what the “energy field” could be, let alone answers to these questions.

The claims of TT are *extraordinary claims*, conflicting with scientific knowledge, and therefore require evidence of very high quality before they can be taken seriously. There are a few published studies supposedly demonstrating benefits of TT, but they are very weak in quality, and have not been repeated by independent investigators.

A great deal of publicity accompanied a science fair project by Emily Rosa showing that TT practitioners could not detect her energy field. While there were some problems with this study, and it does not prove that a human energy field does *not* exist, it raised an important issue: *TT practitioners have never shown that they can detect such a field, let alone manipulate it in such a way as to improve health*. The burden is on them to demonstrate their abilities, not on skeptics to disprove them. *Anyone who can demonstrate, under controlled conditions, the ability to detect the human energy field proposed by TT can win a \$1.1 million prize!*

While some people receiving therapeutic touch treatment may feel better, this is merely a placebo effect.

For further information, see:

<http://www.quackwatch.com/01QuackeryRelatedTopics/tt.html>

Recommendations

Hospitals and other providers of health services should not include therapeutic touch in their programs, and it should not be covered by health insurance. Any benefits are due to the placebo effect and can be better provided by legitimate methods of mind-body medicine. Since TT is based on mystical, pseudoscientific ideas which are contrary to medical knowledge, encouraging belief in TT undermines critical thinking and science education.

Recommendations of KCAHF are based on our assessments of the scientific literature concerning unconventional approaches to health care. For specific recommendations concerning your medical condition, consult your physician.

For further information, contact KCAHF, 7605 Devondale Ct., Louisville, KY 40222 or send e-mail to: tjwheeler@louisville.edu