

International Online Breast cancer Rehabilitation Summit 2016

Presenter: Jane Van De Velde

Welcome to the very first international online breast cancer rehabilitation summit. My name is Denise Stewart – I am your host from Brisbane Australia.

Over the week you have the unique opportunity to listen to experts share their insights and experiences with Breast cancer rehabilitation. The speakers have come from many different parts of the world and from many different health professions. But they all have one thing in common – they are dedicated and passionate about developing and delivering rehabilitation and wellness services to people after breast cancer.

Today we have Jane Van De Velde online. Jane is a registered nurse and has a Doctorate in Nursing and is a Reiki instructor and trainer and founded the Reiki Share Project Jane how did you go from nursing and the medical field to Reiki?

Jane: As a young nurse I learnt about the value of therapeutic touch which is a energetic healing touch. Therapeutic touch can out of nursing practice. I went to a conference and thought it was intriguing - I was fascinated by it and hoped to study it- but when I came back from the conference and presented it to colleagues - they were really negative about it. They thought it was weird and unusual. At the time I thought - this is not the time for me to pursue this.

But the thought of that (experience) never left me. In 2002-3 I was going through a hard time myself- I was was having family doifficulties and I was really looking for some emotional care. I had a friend who was practicing Reiki and she suggested that I try it. At first I thought- no. But the more I thought about it - I thought that this might be like the therapeutic touch. So this was like a circle - I took my first class and I have never looked back. Self care Reiki really helped me deal with the family situation . I have committed myself to Reiki practice. Part of my mission is to bring my nursing skills and knowledge to Reiki practice- so then to be able to

bring it into healthcare settings- so as to be able to work with people with serious illnesses that I had dealt within my nursing career.

So I started into Reiki because of my own need for personal healing. And here I am.

D: The best learning method Jane.

J: Thank You for inviting me to speak at the Summit. I do live in the Chicago area and received my nursing training at Rush University and have been practicing Reiki since 2002. Today I would like to share my experience as a Reiki master teacher and practitioner working with people with a cancer diagnosis. I know the focus of the summit is on breast cancer- but I have experience with people with many different types of cancer diagnosis- many being breast cancer. What I have found over the last 10yrs is that Reiki is helpful and effective for people during their treatment and recovery from a cancer diagnosis. My background in nursing in health care, hospice, community based - with elders and people with chronic health problems. I also worked a lot with caregivers- I think working with people with a cancer diagnosis- the caregivers are very important. So I am very familiar with this group - from a nursing perspective and a Reiki perspective.

I have found that cancer touches everyone- I think it is safe to say that almost everyone knows of someone who has had a cancer diagnosis.

I have found that the cancer community is very open to integrative healing modalities. That is really where my Reiki practice started - because the cancer community said yes!

So as a Reiki practitioner I have part of my practice at Wellness House in Illinois . Wellness house is a non profit organization that provides programs to support people with cancer as well as their family members. All the programs are free to people with cancer- it is a wonderful organization. Wellness house has one program where participants can schedule in a 1hour long session with healing modalities - such as massage, healing touch, Reiki and energy touch. I have been volunteering in this program since 2006 and I have offered over 1100 Reiki sessions to people dealing with cancer. So my work at Wellness house has given me a really good insight into working with this community.

In 2009 I founded the Reiki Share project which is a nonprofit organization here in the state of Illinois - and my personal mission is to teach Reiki. Now some of my inspiration for this project came from Wellness House. There is the saying- Give a man a fish and it will feed him for a day. But if you give him a fishing pole - you feed him for a lifetime. So that is my belief with Reiki- I want to teach people how to use Reiki for self care. I want to get Reiki into people's hands. So our mission at the Reiki share Project is to provide Reiki classes for individuals and caregivers to better manage their life when there is a serious illness / life trauma.

So we started with the cancer community because they are open to this type of treatment. The first class - we had at Wellness House in 2010. And since then we have taught 74 Reiki classes with 600 students completing level 1 Reiki . 35 of those classes have been taught at cancer centers in the Chicago area to people with cancer - as well as their caregivers. Folks dealing with cancer - need support from their caregivers.

Finally in 2012 I started a Reiki volunteer program in Elmhurst Memorial Hospital outpatient cancer center. This is in the Chicago suburbs and it is a Planetree hospital- they follow the Planetree philosophy of patient centered care. Planetree is also a non profit organization and

one of their components is to offer integrative or healing modalities to patients and family. So Reiki fits perfectly within that paradigm. So I started this volunteer program with a volunteer of one. This is how things start - right! So over the past 4 + years the program has grown and now we have nine volunteers. We are in the cancer care center- and this photo is of 2 of our volunteers.

Here we have offered over 800 Reiki sessions to patients, family and staff. More recently we have gone into the inpatient unit. We are offering Reiki to patients who are receiving chemotherapy or other types of infusions -the work is so gratifying . These are short sessions 10-15 mins in length. By the end of the year we will have 9 volunteers providing Reiki services to people with a cancer diagnosis in this setting.

So these are some of the activities over the last 10 years that have given me insight into the cancer experience and how Reiki can fit into that.

Let's take some time to talk about Reiki in more depth. I would like the viewers to know more about how Reiki can benefit people with cancer.

So what is Reiki?

In the past few years more and more people are becoming familiar with Reiki- when I started this back in 2003 - no one had heard of Reiki. Many people had thought that I had gone off the deep edge. But the practice is not a lot more recognized.

Reiki is a complementary , holistic healing practice that promotes overall balance and personal wellbeing in body and mind and spirit. Reiki is based on the idea that there is a universal life force energy that supports our innate healing ability. So the very essence of Reiki- is that it is a healing energy. Reiki actually means healing of the universe and comes to us from Japan in the early 1900's and found its way to the west before WW2. It is really in the 1990's that Reiki has spread and is now a worldwide phenomenon. It is taught around the world by many cultures and many faiths. The caveat here is that Reiki is not a religion - and sometime people will ask this question - but it is non denominational and not affiliated with any religious organization. So it can fit very well into any kind of health organization.

Reiki for self and others. Reiki is offered with light- not invasive touch - so the hands can be placed lightly on the body or just above. By using the hands we can help provide energy- it is that simple. It is the power of intention that provides that energy- it is a very simple practice to learn by anyone. We can offer Reiki to ourselves as well as to others. I have offered Reiki to myself and I have for years. I offer Reiki to my family and friends and then I have my professional practice. So I have connections at many different levels - but the foundation is self care. When we offer Reiki to another person the participant is fully clothed and can be in a seated or lying position.

Sometimes people think of Reiki as a form of massage- but it is not.

What are some of the characteristics of Reiki?

First and foremost Reiki is holistic in nature. It very gently supports healing on every level. It is not possible to separate body, mind and spirit when we talk about health , wellness and healing. And this is true when we talk about anyone with a serious illness and we are talking about cancer here.

So Reiki is safe, gentle and non-invasive. It is simply a laying of hands or hands above the body. There is no physical manipulation of the body- like Chiropractic or physical therapy. Nothing is ingested - no medications, herbs or supplements. Nothing is inserted - like acupuncture needles. There is no application of creams or lotions. There are no medical contraindications or serious side effects reported with Reiki. Reiki is safe to combine with any kind of medical intervention or treatment procedure. People are offering Reiki to himself while they are receiving chemotherapy, test or scans. So it is very flexible.

Reiki is complementary - it can enhance or support any holistic or conventional care that a person is receiving. That being said- Reiki can not be substituted for medical care.

So complementary means - in addition to. Reiki can be added to whatever you are doing - to take care of yourself. Reiki is not alternative- as in my mind that means instead of.

I believe that when people are talking about alternative healing modalities- I think healthcare providers get a little nervous. I believe that Reiki is a part of holistic care. When I

Was working as a nurse in home care and hospice and worked as part of a multi disciplinary team. This is what I wanted Reiki to be- part of that team - integrative and complementary.

Reiki does not rely on diagnosis -we do not prescribe treatment in the practice of Reiki. Our hands are primarily still- we only move our hands to move position from one part of the body to another. The other thing about Reiki - is that we can not predict outcomes- I can not say to someone that your headache will go away. But Reiki is going to help you to relax. I will say that Reiki may be helpful and let's see how it goes- that is how I approach it with people. As what we are doing as Reiki practitioners is creating an opportunity for people to connect to Reiki for the purposes of their own personal healing. We are there simply to help them make that connection - giving them that opportunity. Once the session starts they are in charge of their own process and healing. I am very clear about that with people and I find that concept to be really empowering and helps to shift their thinking to - I am in charge.

Benefits of Reiki- these are mostly anecdotal in nature. The number 1 benefit reported by people is relaxation.

Reiki releases the relaxation response. This work is reported by Herbert Benson - the relaxation response is very powerful as it moves us from stress to relaxation. There is lots of physiological changes in the body that the stress response impacts- metabolism, heart rate, blood pressure breathing and muscle tension increases- it is that flight / fight response- a sympathetic stimulation. When people are relaxed- metabolism, heart rate, blood pressure and muscle tension goes down/ reduces. I see this happening with Reiki. I am not measuring people's metabolic rate during or blood pressure during a Reiki session- but I watch their breathing and this becomes slow and deepens during the session. When my hands are on their body - especially their shoulders- I feel them relax. It shifts- sometimes the muscle twitch a little as the muscle tension releases. They literally sink into the table. So those 2 things I can observe during a Reiki session and then people tell me repeatedly - I feel more relaxed.. I never felt so relaxed... I have not felt this relaxed in such a long time.- after a Reiki session.

So the relaxation response is so powerful - I have really come to believe based on this observation that it is one of the gateways to healing. I really think that if we can get people to relax it is the place to start - there is a lot of good things that can cascade from that .

So get them to relax and people report:

1. Decrease in anxiety, tension and stress
2. Reduced or soften pain
3. Improved sleeping patterns
4. Alleviate fatigue

Study where the report of pain before and after a Reiki session- it may not make the headache go away but perhaps of the headache is rated at 7-8 - then after Reiki it may drop to a 2-3.

So often stress and tension can contribute to pain and so Reiki can help with that.

What do we do at night before we fall asleep - we relax. Very often during a Reiki session- people might fall asleep- this is perfect and exactly what you need.

Other benefits:

1. Enhanced mental clarity
2. Heal emotional issues
3. Release negative thought and attitudes
4. Increase feelings of peace and calm

At Wellness House when people come to me they might have a lot going on in their lives eg starting chemo- having a double mastectomy so their brain has “monkey chatter”- once we can settle them down and slip into that relaxation response- very often their minds will quiet. There is a meditative component to Reiki - although it is not meditation - Reiki helps to quieten the mind and get out of the “monkey chatter”. Sometimes this allows for problem solving and to make decisions that they could not see their way through.

There is a very nurturing calming side to Reiki. Sometimes people may burst into tears as we often may hold grief and sadness and worry inside - so tight and somehow Reiki seems to release this. There is nothing better than a good cry. If this happens- people often say they then feel better.

So these are some of the major benefits that I have seen with my cancer patients and their carers.

Let's look at the scientific benefits as I understand the need for scientific support of what we do. So let's look at how Reiki may work - At this point in time the mechanism of Reiki is not known. How it illicitates the relaxation response and what kind of effect is it having on the sympathetic/ parasympathetic nervous system. Something is happening - but we don't know how this happens.

From a research position it is really challenging to design studies that can quantify or measure Holistic healing energy. Also at this point in time I am not aware of any major research funding that supports randomized clinical trials looking at this type of energy treatment - which limits our ability to perform high quality studies - as they require a lot of funding.

There is published Reiki research that are exploratory and pilot studies with small sample sizes. A lot of the times these are looking at the outcomes of Reiki - for example what are the outcomes reported by the receiver after a Reiki session. Researchers often look at pain, feelings of anxiety as outcome measures.

A wonderful resource is Center for Reiki Research (www.centerforreikiresearch.org) .

- A comprehensive listing of Reiki research studies published in peer reviewed journals.

- Currently 60 peer reviewed research articles published (1989-2016) and summarized on this site
- Each study is analyzed using a rigorous and impartial peer review method.
- Each study is reviewed regarding methodology, treatment protocols and outcome parameters.

I want to talk about a couple of studies:

Study (Fleisher et al 2014) **Integrative Reiki for Cancer patients: a program evaluation**

Study conducted at University of Pennsylvania

N= 162 Reiki treatments offered=305 (10-15 mins each session)

Primarily to cancer patients plus family and staff.

50% decrease in anxiety and pain, depression and fatigue

Study was detailed and easily reproducible and included recommendations for further research.

80% reported being happy with session and would recommend it to others.

Study 2 **The effect of Reiki therapy and companionship on quality of life and symptom distress on chemotherapy.** ORSAK et al 2015

Pilot study - University of Pittsburgh

Objective: to determine if Reiki and companionship made the side effects of chemo more bearable.

N=36 (majority of breast cancer patients) 3 groups;reiki and chemo, companionship and chemo or just chemo.

Both Reiki and companion groups improved in all measures “ significant study in demonstrating that complementary modalities such as Reiki can assist in tolerance of conventional treatments”

Although these are small sample size groups- we do have beginning research supporting Reiki for people with cancer diagnosis.

Reiki shows promise as a healing modality in:

1. Stress
2. Anxiety
3. Chronic pain
4. selfcare

Most people I deal with who have stress and high anxiety - have pain issues.

The experience of Cancer - a continuum (based on my own observations) . People enter the continuum with the diagnosis. This is a very stressful time for people where they connect with many health professionals to make decisions about their care. This stage can last 9 months- 1 year. Once they complete this they go to the next stage “ on the mend” which is the recovery after treatment- grow hair and get their strength back. Sometimes they might feel panic or abandonment as the support they received in treatment stage has ended. So they are not seeing the providers and they may wonder “ who is looking out for me”.

In the survivorship phase they are trying to get back to normal life or finding a new normal. Many people are staying in this stage.

The recurrence phase - starting over with treatment with the possibility of metastasis. The Palliative care / hospice phase occurs for some.

In my experience Reiki can be a valuable tool in any phase of this continuum. I have taught Reiki in all of these phases / stages.

Client experience of Cancer diagnosis:

It affects people at every level- physical, spiritual , mind and emotional. So our approach to cancer care has to be at each of these levels.

Physical Symptoms

- Pain
- Fatigue
- Nausea
- Weight loss
- Hair Loss
- Peripheral neuropathy

Reiki can be helpful in alleviating or softening all of these symptoms.

Mental and Emotional/ Spiritual

- Fear
- Anger
- Denial
- Worry
- Anxiety
- Loss of faith
- Uncertainty
- Chemo brain

Again Reiki can be helpful in managing these symptoms.

Offering Reiki sessions to people with Cancer

Sometimes I may need to offer longer sessions 45- 50 mins or they can be short 10-15 mins. I find that it does not matter what length of time the sessions are- most people can be helped with Reiki. I use a room with a massage table, soft music, ask permission to touch people are fully clothed and I use a series of hand positions and document all sessions.

As most people share their diagnosis with me - it helps me place my hands. Clients find comfort in hands placed on the location of their cancer.

We did a survey at Wellness House 2012:

Stress :	average stress level before	6.2	and after	2
Pain:		5.4	and after	1.6
Anxiety:		6.1	and after	2

This is consistent with the Reiki research studies.

Reiki in Healthcare settings (Elmhurst) :

10-15 mins sessions and not appointment based- offered in seated position.

The results from 5 years:

Pain: rating of 5 dropped to 2.8

Worry: rating dropped from 5 to 2.3

This is not statistical data - it is reported data from the receivers of Reiki.

Verbal feedback:

“I could feel the warmth in my whole body”

“I could feel my stress lifting”

“I feel like I can breathe again”

“I am not worried about anything now”

“My pain is gone”

“This Reiki is like a special love you touch”

If someone can say to me after a Reiki session “I feel better” then in my mind - as a practitioner and volunteer - then mission accomplished.

So offering Reiki sessions to individuals is wonderful- but I want to teach people how to offer Reiki to themselves. It is simple to learn and powerful to both people with cancer and caregivers. People can take this class anytime along that continuum - even in hospice care- even when only days away from death. Even in the last stages of life- it will not cure the cancer- but it can bring comfort oneself.

A level 1 Reiki class is an 8 hr course either in 1-2 sessions. Friends, husband and wife and sisters may take the class together. We focus on simple self treatment in the classes and how to weave it into their daily life. The shorter and simple practice is easier to do and incorporate in their day. We tell people to put your hands where it hurts- head, face knees etc. Also to put your hands where it feels good- to feel comfort eg hand over heart or stomach.

Reiki is powerful and discreet- it can be used anytime- anywhere during any test or procedure. They also learn in class to be able to offer simple Reiki to family and friends- often in the seated

Position.

Reiki is

1. Non invasive
2. Effective
3. Economical
4. Appropriate for all ages (great for children whose parent has a cancer diagnosis)
5. Appropriate for all stages
6. Easy to learn

Reiki principles/ chant

Just for today...

I release all anger

I release all worry

I am grateful for all life's blessings

I devote myself to my work

I am kind to myself and to all living creatures.