

# Reiki and Its Journey Into a Hospital Setting

■ Elizabeth Kryak, MSN, RN-BC ■ Anne Vitale, PhD, APN, AHN-BC

There is a growing interest among health care providers, especially professional nurses to promote caring—healing approaches in patient care and self-care. Health care environments are places of human caring and holistic nurses are helping to lead the way that contemporary health care institutions must become holistic places of healing. The practice of Reiki as well as other practices can assist in the creation of this transformative process. Abington Memorial Hospital (AMH) in Abington, Pennsylvania is a Magnet-designated health care facility with an Integrative Medicine Services Department. AMH's Integrative Medicine staff focuses on the integration of holistic practices, such as Reiki into traditional patient care. Reiki services at AMH were initiated about 10 years ago through the efforts of a Reiki practitioner/nurse and the vision that healing is facilitated through the nurturing of the mind, body, and spirit for healing and self-healing. AMH's sustained Reiki program includes Reiki treatments and classes for patients, health care providers, and community members. This program has evolved to include a policy and annual competency for any Reiki-trained nurse and other employees to administer Reiki treatments at the bedside.

**KEYWORDS:** *caring-healing environments, Reiki, Reiki in hospitals, touch in human caring*

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A basic premise of Reiki is that it brings healing to the self and others.<sup>1</sup> The National Center of Complementary and Alternative Medicine depicts a growing interest among consumers and health care providers, especially with nurses, in complementary and alternative therapies and energy-based touch therapies. Touch therapies growing in popularity include therapeutic touch; healing touch; and, in recent years, Reiki touch therapy as these are noninvasive, not dependent on high-tech care, and inexpensive, and can promote holism in caring-healing approach in patient care and self-care.<sup>2,3</sup>

The American Holistic Nurses Association (2007) endorses the use of energy-based touch therapies by nurses as part of the scope and practice of holistic nursing.<sup>4</sup> Touch practices are embedded in nursing's roots in holism with visionary guidance from Florence

Nightingale,<sup>5</sup> who alluded to the healing effects of the energetic environment on human energy patterns. Martha Rogers'<sup>6</sup> Science of Unitary Human Beings still provides a theoretical basis for the use of energy work in nursing. The vision of contemporary nurse scholars such as Jean Watson and others indicates that holistic nursing practice lies in the direction of greater self-awareness, self-reflection, and spiritual exploration, and that transpersonal caring also promotes the nurturing of the self and self-healing patterns, theory dimensions that may assist in guiding contemporary calls for nursing caring-healing practices grounded in caring.<sup>7,8</sup> Moreover, the leadership of Nightingale, Rogers, Watson, Smith and others has added significant depth and definition to professional nursing, including the quintessence of a physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health approach to caring and healing, caring consciousness, a return to the heart and soul of nursing, and greater access to one's inner healer, useful guidance for 21st century nursing practice.<sup>5-8</sup>

According to the Center for Reiki Research, recent Reiki research findings shows promise toward the alleviation of pain, depression, and anxiety management in patient care.<sup>9</sup> Professional nurses are at the forefront for both the integration of Reiki into traditional health care practice and research.<sup>10</sup> There is growing anecdotal and emerging research literature

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that is suggestive that the practices of Reiki and self-treatment have relevance for professional nurses working in stressful health care environments.<sup>11-17</sup> Evidence is rapidly accruing about burnout, exhaustion, and high levels of stress in nursing that lead to a myriad of health-related problems and fuel organization consequences and nursing shortages that affect patient care.<sup>18-20</sup>

It is my distinct privilege to conduct collaborative Reiki research with Ms Kryak and other colleagues at Abington Memorial Hospital, Abington, Pennsylvania. Her caring work and mentorship embodies calls for nursing and other health care providers to work from a caring-healing paradigm, in harmony with contemporary theory-guided nursing practice. Ms Kryak's reflective and intuitive story about the integration of Reiki practice into a hospital setting and the sharing of her journey to teach Reiki to nurses and community members honor the sacred practice of Reiki. Here is Bette's journey with Reiki into a hospital setting . . . .

A journey with Reiki is a wonderful experience. My journey started about 15 years ago when my 21-year-old son asked me to attend a Reiki demonstration with his girlfriend and their family. The realization of 18 years of nursing practice posited in the Western model of health care, prompted me to ask my son: "What is Reiki?" My son did not know. He only knew that learning more about Reiki was important to his girlfriend. The decision to attend was made merely out of curiosity. I could have been going to a Tupperware demonstration, which is about how much I knew about Reiki at the time!

The Reiki demonstration was for about 30 people. The Reiki Master explained Reiki and did a brief treatment on each of the attendees. The warmth coming from the hands of the Reiki Master was intriguing to me. I quickly made a decision to attend a Reiki Level 1 class. Placing hands on my knees during this class relieved pain from a torn meniscus. At the time, I did not understand how the placement of hands could relieve pain; however, it seemed logical that using a touch therapy to relieve pain had to be better than taking pain medication every 3 to 4 hours. Sensing that "something" was happening with my hands, the decision to attend a Reiki Level II class became a natural choice. I quickly learned that each Reiki level (Reiki Levels 1, II, III and Reiki Master) increases the amount of energy that the practitioner is able to bring through his or her hands, essential to sharing Reiki with others and in self-care.

I continued to spend time with a group of friends trained in Reiki and participated in monthly Reiki shares. A Reiki share involves a group of people who practice Reiki. One member of the group lies on the table while the others provide the healing energies. Each member takes a turn getting a treatment on the table for 10 to 20 minutes. The Reiki shares kept me involved in using this healing modality on myself and others.

The more I used Reiki, the more things started to change in my life, all for the good. Many opportunities came into my life and I availed of each one: opening a business, starting a Reiki program, teaching stress management classes, and being part of Reiki research. There is also the journey of learning that there is more to the human body than the physical body that we see. For example, during Reiki II classes, I was taught the technique of distant Reiki for healing. I treated a friend who was suffering with fibromyalgia for many years. Distance Reiki was sent to this friend every week for a month with the intention of healing her suffering. Within a month, this friend's condition significantly improved.

In 1998, my small Reiki practitioner business was established using an empty room in my house now dedicated as space to do Reiki treatment with others. The costs to buy massage table, candles, music, and a couple of chairs were less than \$500. The room was painted in soft colors with a cloud-like effect. The Reiki I and II certificates hung alongside my nursing license and university diplomas. The investments were small, but the reward of treating clients was large. Many of the clients treated with Reiki at my home suffered with back pain. These clients came to me after trying other pain relieve treatments: physical therapy, water therapy, injections, pain medications, and more. After a few Reiki treatments and instruction on stress management techniques, many of these clients experienced healing and lessened pain. My Reiki practitioner business expanded through word of mouth and brochures that explained Reiki and included my contact information. The brochures were integral to market my Reiki practice and disseminated to the public via local businesses. Feedback from clients still includes that they feel comfortable knowing that a professional nurse is accepting of energy-based modalities.

About 1 year later, a deepened, more spiritual journey with Reiki emerged. This facilitated my desire and enthusiasm to use holistically focused therapies with patients and staff at the hospital. I remember

sitting at the kitchen table telling a friend, “I just know that someday I will be able to do Reiki at the hospital.” And that day came.

Integrative Medicine Services began at Abington Memorial Hospital in September 2000, the facility where this nurse is still employed today. Abington Memorial Hospital is a large suburban hospital just outside of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The administrative director for the rehabilitation medicine department started Integrative Medicine Services with the vision of providing fee-for-service massage therapy and acupuncture for both inpatients and outpatients. The Integrative Medicine Committee, a steering committee that included the chief nursing officer, nurse managers, nurse directors, a surgeon, and medical internist directed the development of these services. This committee guides all decisions about which holistic modalities are offered at AMH with a developed credentialing process. We now have a yearly competency-based process instead of credentialing (Appendix 1).

Early on, a nurse manager asked me to attend an Integrative Medicine Services meeting because of my maternity expertise, and antepartum patients were selected the first inpatient population to receive massage therapy services. This was the right place, and was soon to be the right time! After a couple of meetings, I “boldly” asked the integrative medicine director, “How about we offer Reiki for inpatients and outpatients?” My request was taken to the Integrative Medicine Committee and after a thorough credentials review, this nurse became the first Integrative Medicine Practitioner at AMH marking the beginning of Reiki treatments offered at AMH!

Reiki treatments are implemented “fee-for-service” because of difficulty with insurance company reimbursement for these services. Reiki treatments for the public are done as outpatients using a private room within the Rehabilitation Medicine Department. We have a massage table, soft lighting, relaxing music, and the availability of aromatherapy. Word of mouth and bi-yearly mailings about Integrative Medicine Services help to market these services to the public. We added Integrative Medicine Services to the AMH Web site, [www.AMH.org](http://www.AMH.org), and receive many inquiries about Reiki services. Members of the community simply call Integrative Medicine Services to schedule a Reiki appointment with me. Outpatient clients who receive Reiki services are asked to sign a treatment consent form. Part of my client assessment includes a

brief history reason for the client Reiki treatment request. At the completion of an outpatient Reiki treatment, documentation of the treatment, teaching, and recommendations are standard practice.

It was not long before Reiki treatment requests for the inpatient population emerged on a fee-for-service basis. Any physician can request a consult with Integrative Medicine Services, but many more Reiki treatment requests come directly from patients. Reiki treatments are provided in the hospital rooms with documentation of the treatment entered into the patient’s medical record. All Reiki treatment fees are paid to the AMH Integrative Medicine Services. The collected fees pay the Reiki practitioners for their time treating the patient.

By 2002, I was again ready to advance her Reiki training and become a Reiki Master Teacher. Acutely aware of how stressful today’s health care environments can be, especially for professional nurses, my goal both then and now is to teach Reiki to nurses as a self-care tool for stress management. Teaching Reiki to nurses and other hospital staff began in 2002 and teaching Reiki to members of the community soon followed in 2003. As of June 2011, I have taught more 850 nurses, hospital staff, and community members!

Here are useful tips that can help you start Reiki training classes at your hospital or health care organization: At AMH, Reiki classes are advertised to the nursing staff through flyers posted on the nursing units and nurse managers’ mailboxes. These simple activities quickly prompted many nursing staff members to enroll in the Reiki training classes. Other hospital staff now attends the Reiki training classes and this interest grew from flyers sent to every employee with an e-mail account. Interest for Reiki training from nonnursing employees comes from the finance department, purchasing, laboratory, and many other areas within AMH. Reiki training classes available to the public are advertised in bi-yearly mailings of a booklet sent to the surrounding community and via the AMH Web site. Community members frequently inform me that they enrolled in the AMH Reiki training classes because the Reiki teacher is a nurse and it is a hospital-sponsored program.

I have evolved to have personal knowing about other mind-body therapies. Most of my spare time is spent reading books related to stress management and the relaxation response. In following my path, I

received certification from Harvard University in Mind Body Connection; a certification in hypnotherapy; a certification in mindfulness-based stress reduction, and a certification in intuitive perception and energy diagnosis. These classes enhanced my level of practice by offering me tools to incorporate guided relaxation while doing Reiki treatments. These evolving skill sets are incorporated into holistic nursing practice through teaching clients about stress management and how to elicit a relaxation response. These strategies include relaxation breathing exercises, guided meditation, and mindfulness techniques that can be integrated into clients' daily lives. These tools can help clients feel empowered and in control of their own journey to a healthy mind, body, and spirit.

These mind-body therapies are also shared and taught to the AMH hospital staff. I developed and taught "tools to manage stress" to hospital staff. Attendees learned to incorporate relaxation techniques such as meditation, breathe work, guided imagery, as well as cognitive restructuring and reframing techniques. This free, 6-week program was recently taught using a different topic plus experiential exercise each week and how to practice what was learned. The program was taught in a room next to the hospital cafeteria where employees were encouraged to have their lunch while learning. These classes are now offered to the general public as single sessions offered every 6 months and free of charge.

Abington Memorial Hospital is a Magnet-designated hospital and we now have an active integrative nursing council. This is a multidisciplinary committee with representatives from nursing, laboratory, and secretaries from the hospital. Council members have many different certifications, such as Reiki, aromatherapy, hypnotherapy, Tibetan bell massage, music therapy, and acupressure, among others. Interested council members can attend monthly lectures to help expand their knowledge about holistic modalities. At the request of our chief nursing officer, council members visit nursing units and management meetings to provide selected treatments, such as Reiki, aromatherapy, or hand massage to interested staff. It is interesting to note that council members offer these services on their own time, free of charge. This is an incredible caring-filled experience for both the hospital departments and the volunteers.

Abington Memorial Hospital supports its nursing staff to utilize their Reiki training as part of their day-to-day nursing practice. Typically, staff time is

limited; however, inpatients can receive 10- to 15-minute treatments from AMH nurses who are trained in Reiki. This treatment, at the nurses' discretion, is done as part of patient care assignments and there is no charge to the patient. Appropriate documentation about the Reiki treatment and patient response are documented in the medical record. I developed the policy and procedure for the nursing staff to administer Reiki treatments to hospitalized patients (Appendix 2).

I also developed yearly competencies for staff. Competencies were developed to ensure that Reiki practitioners continued with a unified approach to their Reiki treatments with patients. Once a year, I make contact with the Reiki practitioner to complete the competency (Appendices 3, 4, and 5).

Recently, I was awarded small grant funding to develop and implement Reiki nursing research at AMH. The funding was awarded by the Innovator's Circle, a monetary source comprising philanthropic donations from the local community to help support innovations in health care and service delivery. A pilot study to examine the effects of Reiki and pain management among repeat scheduled cesarean section patients is now under way and is open to study participant enrollment.

In 2010, William Rand and others from The Center for Reiki Research approached me to become part of a funded research team to study Reiki with total knee replacement patients and its effects on pain and anxiety during hospitalization. This investigation is funded through a private philanthropic foundation and is under way at AMH under the supervision of the Center for Reiki Research research team.

My journey with Reiki continues to allow me to broaden my skills with holistic modalities. I have been blessed with an employment opportunity that encourages the development of my well-being and an integration of holistic interests into the work environment. Abington Memorial Hospital embraces caring-healing environments and treating patients and staff holistically. Receiving feedback from those who have taken the Reiki classes and how their lives have been improved, such as reports of fewer illnesses, improved sleep, lessened pain, decreased stress levels, and heightened awareness about the importance of self-care techniques to manage stress are a rewarding for me in this healing work. Future plans include writing for another grant to support free Reiki treatments for AMH inpatients and conduct research for treatment effectiveness.

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**Appendix 1**  
**Integrative Medicine Services**

Reiki Master Teacher Competency

Date of Performance Appraisal \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Title:

Date of Hire: \_\_\_\_\_ Employee #:

The following skills and/or tests of knowledge will be validated.

- Yes  No Teach 3 Level I classes per year, minimum
- Yes  No Teach 3 Level II classes per year; minimum
- Yes  No Teach 2 Level III classes per year; minimum
- Yes  No Mentor trained Reiki practitioners at Abington Memorial Hospital in their exploration of Reiki and other modalities
- Yes  No Complete Reiki I, II and Master Practitioner competency evaluations of staff for the purpose of treating patients at Abington Memorial Hospital
- Yes  No Offer Reiki classes to Lansdale Health
- Yes  No Develop and train staff in documentation of Reiki treatment on their patients
- Yes  No Continue education in energy and mind, body, spirit realm by attending yearly conference or through reading.
- Yes  No Mentor Reiki Master Practitioners to lead Reiki Shares for those trained in Reiki at the hospital.
- Yes  No Develop Reiki research projects
- Yes  No Involve Reiki Master Practitioners in research projects
- Yes  No Demonstrates the ability to assess the appropriateness of providing a Reiki treatment
- Yes  No Demonstrates knowledge of appropriate responses to Reiki treatment
- Yes  No Demonstrates appropriate use of draping patient
- Yes  No Demonstrates appropriate client positioning

RN Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Unit \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Validator Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix 2**

**Reiki policy for nursing staff administering Reiki treatments at the bedside**

Purpose:

To describe the use of Reiki utilized in nursing care at Abington Memorial Hospital

Policy

Nurses who have demonstrated competency and completed additional educational training with Abington Memorial Hospital may use Reiki as described for patient care

Procedure

1. The nurse will perform an assessment of the patient.
2. The nurse will briefly explain Reiki to the patient
  - a. Ancient Japanese modality
  - b. Helps to bring balance to the body
  - c. Assists the body:
    - Relieves or eliminates pain
    - Relieves stress
    - Relieves or eliminate nausea
    - Helps aid sleep

- Helps reduce agitation
  - Helps with dying process
3. Nurse can perform Reiki treatment
    - a. Time of treatment-5 minutes to 15 minutes, whatever time allows
    - b. Patient can be sitting in chair or lying in bed
  4. Nurse will document intervention and the outcome
    - a. Reiki Treatment given to patient
    - b. Length of time of treatment
    - c. Patient response
      - Pain level using scale of 0-10 Pre-Treatment and Post Treatment
      - Nausea relief, patient reported
      - Signs/Symptoms: relaxed, decreased agitation, sleeping, decreased pulse/blood pressure, etc.

### Appendix 3

#### Integrative Nursing Competency: Reiki I

Date of Performance Appraisal \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Title:

Date of Hire: \_\_\_\_\_ Employee #:

The following skills and/or tests of knowledge will be validated.

- Yes  No Demonstrates the ability to assess the appropriateness of providing a Reiki treatment
- Yes  No Demonstrates knowledge of appropriate responses to Reiki treatment
- Yes  No Demonstrates appropriate use of draping patient
- Yes  No Demonstrates appropriate client positioning
- Yes  No State brief explanation of Reiki
- Yes  No State uses of Reiki
- Yes  No Demonstrate self-treatment with hand positions
- Yes  No State brief explanation of chakras
- Yes  No Send 3 de-identified stories of a treatment that you have done on your patient

RN Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Unit \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Validator Signature \_\_\_\_\_

### Appendix 4

#### Integrative Nursing Competency: Reiki II

Date of Performance Appraisal \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Title:

Date of Hire: \_\_\_\_\_ Employee #:

The following skills and/or tests of knowledge will be validated.

- Yes  No Demonstrates the ability to assess the appropriateness of providing a Reiki treatment
- Yes  No Demonstrates knowledge of appropriate responses to Reiki treatment
- Yes  No Demonstrates appropriate use of draping patient
- Yes  No Demonstrates appropriate client positioning
- Yes  No State brief explanation of Reiki
- Yes  No State uses of Reiki
- Yes  No Demonstrate self-treatment with hand positions

- Yes  No State brief explanation of chakras
- Yes  No Send 3 deidentified stories of a treatment that you have done on your patient
- Yes  No Briefly describe the process for a distance Reiki treatment
- Yes  No Continued education through attendance at Reiki shares; Mind-Body-Spirit Expos; or reading relevant books, eg, Energy medicine, Reiki, Mindfulness, Prayer

RN Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Unit \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Validator Signature \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 5

### Integrative Nursing Competency: Reiki III Reiki Master Practitioner

Date of Performance Appraisal \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Hire: \_\_\_\_\_ Employee #: \_\_\_\_\_

The following skills and/or tests of knowledge will be validated.

- Yes  No Demonstrates the ability to assess the appropriateness of providing a Reiki treatment
- Yes  No Demonstrates knowledge of appropriate responses to Reiki treatment
- Yes  No Demonstrates appropriate use of draping patient
- Yes  No Demonstrates appropriate client positioning
- Yes  No State brief explanation of Reiki
- Yes  No State uses of Reiki
- Yes  No Demonstrate self-treatment with hand positions
- Yes  No State brief explanation of chakras
- Yes  No Send 3 deidentified stories of a treatment that you have done on your patient
- Yes  No Briefly describe the process for a distance Reiki treatment
- Yes  No Continued education through attendance at Reiki shares; Mind-Body-Spirit Expos; or reading relevant books, eg, Energy medicine, Reiki, Mindfulness, Prayer
- Yes  No Join the Integrative Nursing Council if job position allows
- Yes  No Lead 1 Reiki Share at Abington Healing Room or at your home.

RN Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Unit \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Validator Signature \_\_\_\_\_