



Teaching Reiki in a Hospital

BY TRACEY SULLIVAN

HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT about teaching Reiki in a hospital? What steps should you take to implement such a program? Should you present the instructional material differently from how a class is typically taught? Who should the class support, and what about receiving financial compensation? Who can guide this process best? In this article, I will share the path that led to my teaching Reiki at Yale New Haven Hospital (YNHH), helpful tips for the aspiring hospital Reiki teacher, and the rewards of involvement in such a program.

My Path to Teaching Reiki in a Hospital

In 2013, while working as a nuclear medicine technologist at Yale New Haven Hospital, the hospital underwent a significant transformation to a new healthcare software system. To help support the staff during this stressful time, Lynelle Abel, now Director of Volunteer Services for Yale New Haven Health System, and Fernanda Clariana, Coordinator of Volunteer Services to include the Reiki program, created an area where staff could receive massage or Reiki treatments throughout the day. Volunteer Services and other complementary medicine staff support resulted in the “Oasis for Healing,” Yale New Haven Hospital’s complementary healing volunteer program.

I visited the Oasis to receive a Reiki session. After my session, I met with Lynelle and Fernanda and offered my services as a Reiki practitioner, and just like that, I became a Reiki volunteer at YNHH!

I volunteered one day a week at the hospital, providing sessions to those who requested Reiki. At the same time, I was also directing a 5K race I founded called “Hope is Coming 5K,” whose proceeds benefited the hospital. I decided I would donate the proceeds of the race to the Oasis for Healing Program, and supporting Reiki at YNHH became the focus of the event. We were the first race ever



“Hope is Coming 5K” friends Tracey Sullivan, Andrea Fraiser Celio, and Fernanda Clariana.

to offer “Reiki at the Race!” This opportunity allowed the hospital volunteers to share Reiki among themselves and with the public while helping create a hospital fund to support efforts for implementing Reiki in the hospital.

After about a year as a hospital Reiki volunteer, Fernanda asked me if I was interested in teaching a Reiki I class at the hospital, and I said YES! That was the start of a partnership and friendship between Fernanda and me. With her vision for providing Reiki to all patients, family members, and staff members, Fernanda became the spark of Reiki at YNHH. The volunteer Reiki program has grown since the inception of the Oasis. I have had the privilege to teach 17 Reiki I classes to staff members and Reiki volunteers at YNHH, and one class, so far, at Bridgeport Hospital.

YNHH Receives a National Award

Under Lynelle and Fernanda’s leadership, YNHH also compiled years of clinical research. In May 2014, Oasis for Healing started a pilot study that extended to April 2015



Oasis For Healing

YNHH VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

The Oasis For Healing Volunteer Program provides complementary therapies. Our Volunteers offer Reiki/Healing Touch, Guided Relaxation, Light Touch Massage and Aromatherapy (by request) to patients, caregivers and staff. The OFH volunteers visit the medical units during different times of the day to help reduce stress and anxiety, while promoting relaxation and a sense of well-being.



Oasis For Healing

QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH RESULTS (SURVEYS)

A Pilot Study

A quantitative research study using participant's ratings from a Likert Analysis Scale from 0 to 5 was conducted.

Results from May 5 to September 30, 2014: 217 patients and staff were surveyed. 169 patients/staff answered pre/post survey questions. 48 patients fell asleep (didn't answer post-treatment survey)

Results from Oct 1, 2014 to April 10, 2015: 137 patients and staff were surveyed. 68 patients/staff answered pre/post survey questions. 69 patients fell asleep (didn't answer post-treatment survey)



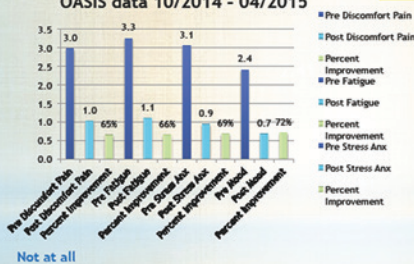
Effects of Reiki/Healing Touch, Light Touch, Guided Relaxation, Combined on Patients and Employees Stress/Anxiety, Fatigue, Discomfort/Pain, and Mood Level

Data extracted from 137 Surveys of Patients/Staff (YSC & SRC)

Very High

OASIS data 10/2014 - 04/2015

Quantitative research method 10/2014 - 04/2015



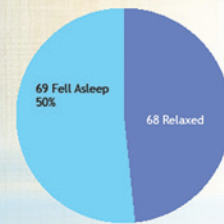
% Improvement (reduction of symptoms)	
Discomfort/Pain	65%
Fatigue	66%
Stress/Anxiety	69%
% Improvement	
72%	Mood Improvement



Effects of Reiki/Healing Touch, Light Touch, Guided Relaxation, Combined on Patients and Employees Stress/Anxiety, Fatigue, Discomfort/Pain, and Mood Level

Data extracted Oct 01-April 10, 2015 from 120 Surveys of Patients/Staff (YSC & SRC)

Total of Patients Surveyed



Quantitative research method:

- 137 Patients and staff were surveyed
- 68 Patients and staff completed before/after survey questions
- 69 Patients peacefully fell asleep during the session, therefore, we were pleasantly unable to report post-survey results.

We consider This a big Success!

and continues today. It was a quantitative research study using participant's ratings from a Likert Analysis Scale from 0 to 5. See an example of the results above.

In 2015 the program won a national award. The American Hospital Association of Healthcare Volunteer Resource Professionals selected YNHH to receive the "Extraordinary Program Award" for the Oasis for Healing Program. There were many programs nominated from hospitals across the country, but YNHH won the first-place recognition.

Tips for Creating a Hospital-Based Reiki Class

The following are some tips for creating a successful hospital-based Reiki class. If a Reiki program exists at the hospital, they will address some of these items at the orientation. But this is not the case in all hospitals, and so prepare information if requested by the facility. I have been fortunate to have Fernanda, who is an expert on implementing Reiki into the hospital setting. I

have also included some tips for various shorter presentations appropriate for sharing information about Reiki in the hospital setting.

A PowerPoint Presentation

One powerful tool is to create a PowerPoint presentation focused on Reiki training within the hospital environment. The presentation will help your students learn, and it will also assist you in keeping on schedule and covering all the things needed. The words and images in your slides will involve and engage students and is an interesting way to get your points across. An excellent presentation can also work as a tool to visually show to hospital management the subjects about which you will teach, with a specific slant pertinent to teaching Reiki to hospital employees and volunteers.

Topics specific to a hospital setting are a priority, so it should include not only the subjects and techniques taught in a Reiki I class but also the items that will be different in the hospital setting. These include proper hygiene, the

Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA), proper body mechanics and safety, and a mentoring/shadowing program.

- ◆ **Proper Hygiene**—The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states hand washing is “one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of germs. Clean hands can stop germs from spreading from one person to another and throughout an entire community—from your home and workplace to childcare facilities and hospitals.”¹ For more information on handwashing, visit CDC’s handwashing website (www.cdc.gov) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO. It will be vital you understand proper “standard precautions” before entering any healthcare setting. Volunteers need to know when not to enter a patient room. The best way to determine this is to check-in at the nurse’s station before proceeding to patient rooms.

- ◆ **HIPPA**—In 1996, the U.S. Congress endorsed the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act or HIPAA. The HIPAA Privacy Rule, also called the Standards for Privacy of Individually Identifiable Health Information, provided the first nationally recognizable regulations for the use/disclosure of an individual’s health information.²

It is essential to cover the specifics of this government mandate with those new to the hospital setting. Hospitals will also require HIPPA training independent of the Reiki class upon employment or becoming a volunteer. It is also important for the Reiki class students to familiarize themselves with confidentiality requirements.

- ◆ **Proper Body Mechanics and Safety**—The hospital setting is unique as beds are not conducive to a Reiki session. It helps to work with those new to the hospital setting on how best to position themselves once they are in the patient’s room. This instruction requires flexibility and safety-mindedness.

Flexibility includes being able to accommodate whatever position the patient is in when you enter the room while feeling comfortable yourself. Safety-mindedness includes knowing the requirements for which side-rails are mandatory to have up, the importance of bringing the bed down to the lowest

height before leaving the room, and making sure the patient’s call bell is within reach. In class, we use stretchers provided by the hospital not only to show what you will encounter in the hospital room, but this also relieves you from having to provide tables for practice!

- ◆ **Mentoring/Shadowing Program**—Assigning new volunteers a mentor is valuable to help even experienced Reiki practitioners acclimate to the hospital setting. From the practical side are the layout of the hospital, dress code, identification badge, the volunteer office, signing in and out, a straightforward way for volun-



teers to see which patients have requested a session, and proper documentation. During this shadowing period, volunteers get a sense of how long they should spend with each recipient based on the number of requests, and when it is not appropriate to enter a patient’s room.

- ◆ **Guidance on Hospital Sessions**—Because the hospital population represents the public, and not everyone is aware of what Reiki is, it is a good idea to give the recipient a short explanation of what Reiki is. Practice this! In fact, the hospital may already have a phrase that they want you to use. Ask if physical touch is okay as some facilities prohibit touch, in which case you can hover your hands over the body. Be mindful to keep it simple. For example, someone new to Reiki will probably not understand symbol drawing, scanning the body, and other aspects.

Reiki Presentations for Medical Personnel

Opportunities to present shorter Reiki presentations to various audiences within the healthcare field exist as well. Some examples of PowerPoint presentations that I have created are:

- ◆ *Reiki and the Workplace*® focuses on benefits for the patient, caregivers, and the healthcare business. An excellent explanation of the science of Reiki is helpful as the audience will probably have a scientific background.
- ◆ *Healing in the Golden Years*® focuses on Reiki and the elderly—what Reiki is, how Reiki heals, how the elderly enjoy Reiki, creating space in confinement (wheelchair, bed), and how Reiki helps caregivers.
- ◆ *Healing from the Heart with Reiki*® focuses on cardiac patients—the human energy field, the energetic anatomy of the heart, what Reiki is, and how it heals, healing and curing, Reiki and sound healing.

The key is to know your audience's background and focus on what would be significant to them. For example, in my presentation for cardiac patients, I include the energetic anatomy of the heart, and I end the presentation with a heart-focused meditation while playing the heart crystal singing bowl. Use your imagination and ask Reiki to guide you!

Other points you can make include the potential benefits for patients, caregivers, and the healthcare business.³

For Patients

1. Reduction of stress, anxiety
2. Promoting a feeling of control and engagement in own wellbeing
3. Promoting trust between patient and caregiver(s)
4. Added benefit to conventional drug therapies potentially allowing reduced medication, fewer side effects, and toxicities
5. Possible shorter recovery times

For Caregivers

1. Reduction of stress/burnout
2. Promoting positive wellbeing, sense of competence

For Healthcare Business (Hospitals, Clinics, Hospice)

1. Reducing inpatient stays in hospitals

2. Fewer complications
3. Reduction in staff turnover
4. Reduction in invasive procedures
5. Destination of choice for elective procedures

Charging a Fee

In the first few classes, we noted many students were coming to the course but not following up with volunteering. Now the students do not receive their certificate until they complete 50 hours of volunteer service at the hospital. The exception is hospital employees who attend the class to implement Reiki in the hospital from a hospital-employee perspective.

And what about charging a fee as the Reiki teacher? Whether you can charge a fee for your services will depend on the hospital and what resources are in place. As implementation of Reiki in a focused and organized way begins to show its value not only on physical, emotional, and spiritual levels but on a financial level, the hospital can create an avenue for compensation.

For five years, I happily volunteered my time as a Reiki teacher at YNHH, and in 2018, the Director of Volunteer Services compensated me. So, if you teach Reiki at a hospital, be open to anything and have expectations about nothing! From my perspective, even more so than in my private practice classes, allowing Reiki to guide the process, listening to guidance, and allowing yourself to follow it is paramount to a successful hospital-based Reiki class. Bringing Reiki into a hospital is a huge agreement, and it takes multiple people saying YES to make it happen.

As the Reiki teacher, you reap the rewards of a lot of work done at the level of the hospital administration. As a hospital Reiki teacher, it is our job to listen to the needs of the hospital, be willing to do things differently from our private practice, and work from the purity of the heart, letting Reiki teach the class.

The path of a volunteer is pure love, and the rewards are spiritual affluence. There is nothing more beautiful than the heart of a volunteer, and when you add Reiki, it takes on a heightened sense of the divine. It is the Reiki volunteers who are demonstrating the power of Reiki in the hospital setting. Without their devotion, we would not be aware of the various benefits a Reiki program brings to a hospital. I have watched volunteers and hospital employees from all sections of the hospital transform with the gentle power of Reiki. I've heard stories from volunteers whose purpose for



My Reiki I Class, March 7, 2020, at Yale New Haven Hospital.

taking the Reiki class was to help patients and are surprised to find a deep level of healing transforms them. It is such an honor to realize that for this moment in time, you are a part of another being's spiritual path.

The rewards of creating a program where none exists or joining one to teach in your local hospital are diverse. Everyone benefits—the volunteer, the hospital, you as the teacher, and *the patient*, who is the primary focus of the

hospital-based Reiki class! So, if you never thought about teaching Reiki in a hospital setting, I hope my tips inspire you along this path. I know you will always be successful if you let Reiki lead the way. 🌸



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Endnotes

- ¹ "Standard Precautions." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, June 18, 2018. <https://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/infectioncontrol/summary-infection-prevention-practices/standard-precautions.html>.
- ² "What Is HIPAA?" What is HIPAA. <http://whatishipaa.org/>.
- ³ "Integrating Reiki into Hospitals: Emerging Trends and Future Possibilities." The Center for Reiki Research. http://www.rcpaconference.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/W51_Garver_-Reiki-In-Hospitals.pdf.