

# The Effects of Yoga, Massage, and Reiki on Patient Well-Being at a Cancer Resource Center

Mark S. Rosenbaum, PhD, and Jane Van de Velde, DNP, RN



© Jacob Ammentorp Lund/iStock/Thinkstock

**Background:** Cancer resource centers offer patients a variety of therapeutic services. However, patients with cancer and cancer healthcare practitioners may not fully understand the specific objectives and benefits of each service. This research offers guidance to cancer healthcare practitioners on how they can best direct patients to partake in specific integrative therapies, depending on their expressed needs.

**Objectives:** This article investigates the effects of yoga, massage, and Reiki services administered in a cancer resource center on patients' sense of personal well-being. The results show how program directors at a cancer resource center can customize therapies to meet the needs of patients' well-being.

**Methods:** The experimental design measured whether engaging in yoga, massage, or Reiki services affects the self-perceived well-being of 150 patients at a cancer resource center at two times: before and after each service. Data were analyzed for each well-being outcome using mixed-model analysis of variance.

**Findings:** All three services helped decrease stress and anxiety, improve mood, and enhance cancer center patrons' perceived overall health and quality of life in a similar manner. Reiki reduced the pain of patients with cancer to a greater extent than either massage or yoga.

Mark S. Rosenbaum, PhD, is a Kohl's Corporation Professor of Retail Marketing in the College of Business at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb and Jane Van de Velde, DNP, RN, is president of the Reiki Share Project in Villa Park, IL. The authors take full responsibility for the content of the article. Writing and editorial support was provided by Francesca Van Gorp Cooley, BA, at Effectual Editorial Services. The content of this article has been reviewed by independent peer reviewers to ensure that it is balanced, objective, and free from commercial bias. No financial relationships relevant to the content of this article have been disclosed by the independent peer reviewers or editorial staff. Rosenbaum can be reached at [mrosenbaum@niu.edu](mailto:mrosenbaum@niu.edu), with copy to editor at [CJONEditor@ons.org](mailto:CJONEditor@ons.org). (Submitted February 2015. Revision submitted June 2015. Accepted for publication June 24, 2015.)

Key words: cancer resource centers; Reiki; therapeutic touch; massage therapy; yoga; integrative cancer therapies

Digital Object Identifier: 10.1188/16.CJON.E77-E81

Social scientists from an array of disciplines, including oncology, health, and service research, have begun investigating the therapeutic role of services offered at cancer resource centers on the psychosocial well-being of patients with cancer. The suggestion has been made that cancer resource centers represent “healing landscapes” that serve the emotional, social, and informational needs of people living with cancer and those who care for them (English, Wilson, & Keller-Olaman, 2008, p. 74). Other researchers have reported that cancer resource centers often become a home away from home, or a “third place,” for patients with cancer because such environments help them to alleviate the feelings of social isolation and stigma that often accompany medical treatments and a cancer diagnosis (Glover & Parry, 2009, p. 97). Researchers have also discovered that, by participating in cancer resource center activities, patients with cancer can often temporarily relieve various side effects, such as cancer-related fatigue, and receive life-enhancing

social supportive services (Rosenbaum & Smallwood, 2011, 2013).

Oncologists, nurses, social workers, and other health-related employees have endorsed integrative therapy services at cancer resource centers (DiGianni, Garber, & Winer, 2002; Fowler & Newton, 2006). These services, including individual and group support programs, are typically delivered free of charge to patients at cancer resource centers. Services include educational, nutritional, and wellness programs, as well as integrative therapies, such as aromatherapy and essential oils, yoga, massage, and Reiki (Anderson & Taylor, 2012; Long, Huntley, & Ernst, 2001; Ness, 2013). In the context of this article, integrative therapies refer to those that are administered together with conventional medicine, whereas alternative medicine or therapies are used in place of conventional medicine. This article's focus is on integrative therapies offered to patients with cancer in conjunction with conventional medicine and with a physician's approval.