

# **Reiki: Practitioners' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of a Complementary Therapy in the Treatment Regime of People with Dementia**

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## **Abstract**

International and national research has shown that the use of complementary therapies (often referred to in the scientific literature as either alternative therapies or unconventional therapies) is widespread. However, there is little in the scientific literature about the use of complementary therapies in the treatment regime of people with dementia. Specifically, there have been no published results of investigations into the use of Reiki, a holistic complementary therapy, in the treatment regime of people with dementia.

Before proceeding with an in-depth examination into the use of Reiki in the care of people with dementia, a questionnaire containing both closed and open-ended questions was distributed to 162 South Australian High Care Residential Facilities (formerly called Nursing Homes) in 2002. The return rate was 58.0% (n=94) of which 50.0% of the mail out (n=81) was available for analysis. Findings from the questionnaires suggested that a wide range of complementary therapies including aromatherapy, massage, music, behaviour therapy, healing touch, Reiki and Therapeutic Touch (Krieger/Kunz method) were used regularly within South Australian High Care Residential Facilities. Complementary therapies were reportedly used to calm residents, improve behaviour management, enhance the quality of life of residents, promote 1:1 interaction, stimulate the senses, and reduce the need for medication.

Due to 15 facilities reporting the use of Reiki, a series of semi-structured interviews with Reiki practitioners caring for people with dementia was conducted in 2004/2005. Interview participants (n=10) included a representative range of people providing care for people with dementia in eight Nursing Homes in Adelaide, South Australia. Data reduction methods included a quasi-statistical counting of key words and repeated re-readings of the transcripts to discover the essences, abstract the meanings and arrange them into themes and sub-themes.

The results of the interviews suggested that Reiki is an easy to learn and easy to use holistic complementary therapy which has the potential to enhance the quality of life of the persons with dementia, their family members, and their carers. The interview participants reported improved physical, psychological, mental and emotional well-being as well as enhanced relationships and a reduction in negative behaviours following the use of Reiki.

The receipt of the first Jack Loader Scholarship from the Rosemary Foundation for Memory Support Inc. in early 2005 enabled the researcher to transfer to full-time studies from April 2005.

**Key Words:** aged care; alternative therapies; complementary therapies; dementia; early onset dementia; one to one interaction; quality of life; Reiki; therapeutic touch; unconventional therapies.

## Declaration

*I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.*

Graham R. Webber

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The receipt of the first Jack Loader Scholarship from the Rosemary Foundation for Memory Support Inc. in early 2005 enabled the researcher to transfer to full-time studies from April 2005.