

The Development and Validation of an Outcome Measure for Spiritual Healing: A Mixed Methods Study.

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Background: Spiritual healing, probably the oldest documented paramedical intervention, is a neglected area of research. In order to conduct further research into the effects of healing, a valid and reliable outcome measure is needed that captures the experience of individuals receiving healing (healees) and is not burdensome to complete. We aimed to develop such a measure.

Methods: A mixed methods design was used. Focus groups and cognitive interviews were used to generate and refine questionnaire items grounded in the experiences and language of healees (Study 1). The resulting questionnaire was tested and its formal psychometric properties were evaluated (Study 2). Participants were recruited from a spiritual healing sanctuary and via individual healers (including registered spiritual healers, Reiki practitioners, healers affiliated with churches). **Results:** In Study 1, 24 participants took part in 7 focus groups and 6 cognitive interviews. 29 common effects were identified and grouped into 7 discrete dimensions that appeared to characterize potentially sustainable effects reported by participants following their experiences of spiritual healing. In Study 2, 393 participants returned completed baseline questionnaires, 243 of whom completed the questionnaire again 1-6 weeks later. Exploratory factor analysis generated 5 subscales, based on 20 of the items: outlook, energy, health, relationships and emotional balance. These subscales demonstrated acceptable internal consistency, convergent validity and test-retest reliability. Three of the subscales and the whole questionnaire demonstrated good sensitivity to change. **Conclusions:** We have produced a psychometrically sound healing impact questionnaire that is acceptable to healees, healers and researchers for use in future evaluations of spiritual healing.

Bishop FL, Barlow F, Walker J, McDermott C, Lewith GT. *Psychother Psychosom.* 2010 Aug 20;79(6):350-362. University of Southampton School of Medicine, Aldermoor Health Centre, Southampton, UK.

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