

Reiki for the treatment of fibromyalgia: a randomized controlled trial.

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Fibromyalgia is a common, chronic pain condition for which patients frequently use complementary and alternative medicine, including Reiki. Our objective was to determine whether Reiki is beneficial as an adjunctive fibromyalgia treatment. DESIGN: This was a factorial designed, randomized, sham-controlled trial in which participants, data collection staff, and data analysts were blinded to treatment group. SETTING/LOCATION: The study setting was private medical offices in the Seattle, Washington metropolitan area. SUBJECTS: The subjects were comprised 100 adults with fibromyalgia. INTERVENTION: Four (4) groups received twice-weekly treatment for 8 weeks by either a Reiki master or actor randomized to use direct touch or no touch (distant therapy). OUTCOME MEASURES: The primary outcome was subjective pain as measured by visual analog scale at weeks 4, 8, and 20 (3 months following end of treatment). Secondary outcomes were physical and mental functioning, medication use, and health provider visits. Participant blinding and adverse effects were ascertained by self-report. Improvement between groups was examined in an intention-to-treat analysis. RESULTS: Neither Reiki nor touch had any effect on pain or any of the secondary outcomes. All outcome measures were nearly identical among the 4 treatment groups during the course of the trial. CONCLUSION: Neither Reiki nor touch improved the symptoms of fibromyalgia. Energy medicine modalities such as Reiki should be rigorously studied before being recommended to patients with chronic pain symptoms.

J Altern Complement Med. 2008 Nov;14(9):1115-22. Assefi N, Bogart A, Goldberg J, Buchwald D. Department of Medicine, University of Washington, Seattle, WA, USA.
