

The Science Behind Distant Healing

By Bernadette Doran, BS, RMT

Of all aspects of Reiki therapy, distant healing is the one that most often perplexes those who are not familiar with or trained in energy medicine. Skeptics have a very hard time believing that energy can travel across great distances, much less produce tangible results. This article is intended to offer help in two ways: 1) To explore basic quantum physics principles that help explain the science behind distant healing, and 2) to cite examples of research on distant healing that document its effectiveness.

Historically, many spiritual traditions and indigenous cultures believe in the “oneness” or



interconnectedness of all things and the ability of one person to affect another through thought or energy. For example, in his book *Urban Shaman*, Hawaiian shaman Serge Kahili King describes the *aka web*: “*Aka* is a Hawaiian word meaning ‘essence’ or ‘shadow,’ and also refers to the idea of a nonphysical web of threads connecting everything in the universe...We can say that the connections of the web always

exist, but specific threads are only activated by conscious attention.”

Anthropologists studying cultures around the world have documented nonlocal connections in consciousness, the subtle link of thought or information exchange between two people regardless of separation in space and time. For example, anthropologist A. P. Elkin found that Australian Aborigines seem able to be in touch with their clan no matter where they roam, so that someone far from home will suddenly announce that his mother is dead or his wife has given birth – facts proven to be true.

A nonlocal link to each other as well as to their environment may have saved the lives of the Sentinelese living in the remote Andaman Islands in the Indian Ocean, virtually isolated from the rest of the world. They were expected to perish in the 2004 Asian tsunami catastrophe, but they all survived – they had all moved up to the highlands long before the tsunami hit,

and they all escaped the fatal waves.

Cultures less attached to modern forms of information transmission, like the internet and television, seem to have greater access to their “celestial receivers,” as anthropologist Marlo Morgan describes it. But almost all of us have had the experience of instantly feeling or knowing when something bad has happened to a loved one, and transpersonal connections – between human beings as well as between animals and humans – have long been documented in laboratory settings.

Science has not been able to explain these phenomena, but quantum physics is changing that. Physicist Albert Einstein was the first to perceive physical evidence of interconnectedness. He observed the interaction of two objects separated in space, with no known mediator of their interaction, and called it, somewhat whimsically, “spooky action at a distance.”

Even though Einstein was moving beyond it, Newtonian physics was the only physics approach of his day, a 17th Century theory embraced for 200 years that said all the elements of the universe are isolated from each other and are self-contained.

It was not until the early 1900’s when the pioneers of quantum physics – including Max Planck, Erwin Schrodinger, Werner Heisenberg, Niels Bohr, and Wolfgang Pauli – shattered the Newtonian world view of separateness by offering us a new understanding of the universe based on interconnectedness.

Their equations led them to astounding discoveries. “These equations stood for the Zero Point Field – an ocean of microscopic vibrations in the space between things,” says Lynne McTaggart in her book *The Field*. “They realized the very underpinning of our universe was a heaving sea of energy, one vast quantum field. If this were true, everything would be connected to everything else like some invisible web.”

Since all living things are made of the same basic quantum material, physicists theorized, they are all interconnected in this invisible web. “On the most fundamental level, living beings, including human beings, were packets of quantum energy constantly exchanging information with this inexhaustible energy sea,” says McTaggart. “Information about all aspects of life, from cellular communication to the vast array of controls of DNA, was relayed through an information exchange on the



quantum level...and the quantum energy sea.”

In studying this sea of quantum potential, physicist David Bohm saw implications for location – or rather, non-location. “At the level of our everyday lives, things have very specific locations,” writes Michael Talbot in *The Holographic Universe*. “But Bohm’s interpretation of quantum physics indicated that at the subquantum level, the level in which quantum potential operated, location ceased to exist. All points in space become equal to all other points in space, and it was meaningless to speak of anything as being separate from anything else. Physicists call this property ‘nonlocality.’”

Regarding the “sending” and “receiving” of the form of information we call healing energy, therefore, nonlocality implies that it’s not really “going” somewhere else – it’s already there, and it’s already shared. “Quantum nonlocality... indicates that information is subtly but effectively transmitted throughout the quantum world,” Ervin Laszlo writes in *Science and the Akashic Field: An Integral Theory of Everything*. “As this informational linking is both instant and enduring, it appears to be independent of space and time as well.”

Implications from this quantum world of interconnectedness create the scientific foundation to explain Einstein’s “spooky action,” spiritual traditions of oneness, indigenous “celestial receivers” of information, and the growing body of documented effects of distant healing.

Distant Healing Research

The effects of distant healing have been measured in more than 100 experiments conducted over the past 30 years, and more than half of them are described in the article *Distant Healing* by Daniel J. Benor, MD.

In the abstract, Dr. Benor says, “This article reviews 61 studies of distant healing, which is healing that is deliberately sent by one or more healers as an intent, wish, meditation or prayer to a healee who may be in the healers' presence or may be far away. Distance, even thousands of miles, does not appear to limit the effects of healing. Significant effects of distant healing are demonstrated in randomized controlled trials in humans, animals, plants, bacteria, yeasts, cells in the laboratory, and DNA. Fascinating new insights about energy medicine and integrative care are suggested by these studies. “

Included in Dr. Benor’s overview are studies showing measurable positive outcomes through distant healing for a wide variety of subjects, including retarding the growth of bacteria, slowing the growth of cancer cells cultured in a laboratory, altering the rate of winding and

unwinding of DNA strands, slowing the growth of experimentally induced tumors in mice, protecting mice from the effects of radiation, accelerating post-surgical cardiac patient recovery, and creating positive outcomes for back pain, hypertension, anxiety and nausea in chemotherapy.

One of the most famous studies on distant healing, included in Dr. Benor's article, was conducted by Elisabeth Targ, renowned for her scientific rigor. In 1996, Targ enrolled 40 patients with advanced AIDS in a randomized, double-blind study at the California Pacific Medical Center's Complementary Medicine Research Institute. Pairs of subjects were matched for age, CD4 white cell counts, and AIDS-related illnesses, and were randomly assigned either to receive distant healing or no healing. All the subjects received standard care from their own physicians.



Distant healing was sent by 40 healers with at least 5 years of healing experience from a variety of healing and religious traditions, including Christianity, Buddhism, Judaism, Native American and other shamanic traditions, and modern-day healing schools.

The healers were given the first names and photographs of 5 of the subjects, and sent an hour of healing every day, 6 days a week, for 10 weeks. The healers were randomly rotated, so that every recipient received healings from 10 different healers during the study.

After 6 months, those who had received distant healing during the study had fewer AIDS-related illnesses and lower severity of illnesses. They required fewer doctor visits, they spent less time in the hospital, and they felt better than before the study began. The differences were measurable and statistically significant.

“While distant healing appears to contradict our ordinary sense of reality and the laws defined by conventional science, there are theoretical paradigms that appear to offer explanations for healing,” concludes Dr. Benor in his article *Distant Healing*. “These studies of absent healing introduce Newtonian medicine to the action of mind from a distance, ‘nonlocal consciousness’ as Larry Dossey terms it. This is consonant with the theories of modern physics that postulate interactions between certain particles from any distance. These hypotheses have been supported by research. This is also supported by a wealth of research in parapsychology, demonstrating that minds can interact through telepathy that a

person can obtain information about physical objects from a distance through clairsentient perception, and that direct mental influence over physical objects is possible.”

Larry Dossey, MD, has led the charge for bringing distant healing therapies into mainstream healthcare. In his book *Reinventing Medicine: Beyond Mind-Body to a New Era of Healing*, he describes three eras of medical practice. “Era I emphasized a completely physical, body-based approach to health and illness. Era II expanded the Era I focus by adding a place for the effects of the mind. Yet the mind-body effects of Era II remained centered within each individual – one’s own mind affecting one’s own body,” he writes.

But Era III will introduce an exciting time of what Dr. Dossey calls “nonlocal medicine.” He says, “Many studies reveal that healing can be achieved at a distance... These findings reveal the ability of some part of our mind or consciousness to escape its confinement to the brain and body and act anywhere, regardless of distance. The medical implications of this are profound.”

In his book, Dr. Dossey cites research studies that document measurable outcomes for a variety of distant healing techniques and subjects, including the effects of prayer on artery bypass patients at New England Deaconess Hospital in Boston and coronary care patients at San Francisco General Hospital, and the effects of distant qi gong healing on human tissue.

Dr. Dossey draws several conclusions from his continuing research into distant healing, including:

- ❖ Consciousness is nonlocal. It extends beyond the individual. It cannot be confined to specific points in space, such as brains or bodies, or specific points in time, such as the present moment.
- ❖ Consciousness is an ordering principle. It can insert information into disorganized or random systems and create higher degrees of order.
- ❖ Both individual and group consciousness can insert order or information into the world, and can extract information from the world as well.

Hopefully this brief overview will help you inform your clients and the curious who may ask for an explanation of distant healing. For much richer levels of information and details, please refer to the bibliographical resources below.

- *Distant Healing* by Daniel Benor, MD. Reprinted with permission of the author and publisher. Original publication: *Subtle Energies* 2000, 11(3), 249-2664. The International Society for the Study of Subtle Energies and Energy Medicine (ISSSEEM), 1105 Ralston Rd., Ste. 100D, Arvada, CO 80004, (303) 425-4625 Fax (303) 425-4685 Chief Executive Officer: C. Penny Hiernu. www.issseem.org ISSSEEM@compuserve.com Daniel J. Benor, M.D. P.O. Box 502 Medford, NJ 08055. www.WholisticHealingResearch.com. DB@WholisticHealingResearch.com. A PDF file of this report can be obtained at <http://www.noetic.org/research/dh/research/DistantHealing.pdf>
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Author Bio: Bernadette Doran, BS, RMT, is the director of Equilibrium Energy + Education, a wellness center in Chicago dedicated to state-of-the-art energy-based therapies, classes and workshops. The website is www.equilibrium-e3.com, and Bernadette can be reached at bdoran@industrialstrengthsoul.com

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