



# HEALING TOUCH FOR VA PATIENTS

**Jeesook Lee, APRN, Ruth Janus, MSN**

*Edward Hines Jr. VA Hospital, Hines, IL*

This poster was not supported by any funding. The investigators retained full independence in reporting this content.



## Introduction

The VA serves a diverse and complex Veteran population with distinguished backgrounds and physical conditions. In 2008, President Barack Obama set an aggressive goal to transform VA into a modern 21st century organization that would effectively and efficiently care for Veterans and their families/eligible beneficiaries.

This transformation involved a fundamental change to VA operations and a significant shift in VA's culture.

With the goal in mind, the VA Strategic Plan 2014-2020 was developed to achieve cultural change by applying personalized, proactive, patient-driven health care to optimize health and well-being, while providing optimal disease management.

The VA formed PACT (Patient Aligned Care Teams) to promote a partnership between the Veteran and the health care team with emphasis on prevention, health promotion, and self-management.

Complimentary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) therapy is the use of complementary and alternative methods to enhance comfort, reduce pain, reduce symptoms like anxiety, depression, insomnia, fatigue, and eventually to improve their sense of well being.

Several small CAM studies funded by NCCAM show that CAM therapy is cost effective and has a positive impact in dealing with certain pain conditions.

Healing Touch has been introduced as a part of CAM at Hines VA Hospital.

## CAM in the VA

The CAM program has emerged in the VA with Veterans' request as well as in response to 2005 White House initiatives for CAM.

VA completed and published two national wide CAM surveys.

Over 64% of Veterans already use CAM modalities, according to a 2011 VA CAM survey, to improve their sense of well-being and for healing.



## CAM Practices at Hines VA Hospital

- Biofeedback Therapy
- Meditation
- Aroma Therapy
- Yoga
- Music Therapy
- Healing Touch
- Reiki
- Therapeutic Massage
- Osteopathic Manipulation
- Acupuncture
- Life Couch



## How Healing Touch started at Hines VA Hospital

As a part of CAM modalities, Healing Touch started in 2011, after in-hospital training was offered, mainly for chronic refractory pain management at first, and then this scope of practice extended to Veterans with PTSD, anxiety, and Veterans enrolled in the Hospice program.

Veterans are referred from their Primary Providers, Pain Clinic, Pain School, and other specialty clinics.

Between 08/11 and 12/13, 115 sessions were offered for various conditions. There were great improvement of symptoms and high satisfaction.

The majority of Veterans were male. The therapy was given by either one or two therapists.

Therapy was given in various locations.

Therapy session offered up to 10 times depending on Veteran's response and needs.

Average therapy times are:  
 - One and half hours for initial evaluation  
 - One hour for all regular sessions

Follow up report shared with the referral sources.

### Healing Touch Data

Total: 115	Duration: 8/2011-12/2013	
Sex	Male	105
	Female	10
Age	20-30	5
	31-40	0
	41-50	17
	51-60	36
	61-70	35
	71-80	15
	Over 81	2
Reason for HT	Pain	75
	Anxiety	48
	Hospice	8
	Insomnia	1

## Pain Management in VA

- The VHA National Pain Management Strategy, initiated November 12, 1998, established Pain Management as a national priority.
- The overall objective of the national strategy is to develop a comprehensive, multicultural, integrated, system-wide approach to reduce pain and suffering and improve quality of life for Veterans experiencing acute and chronic pain associated with a wide range of injuries and illnesses, including terminal illness.
- Stepped Care is instituted as a strategy to provide a continuum of effective treatment.
- The Biopsychosocial Model is the frame of effective treatment plan.
- The VA accepts Quality of Life as a standard outcome measure of effectiveness of treatment.

### Healing Touch Data for pain

- Before therapy more moderate to severe pain reported.
- After the therapy there was no severe pain reported.
- Many reported no pain (19 times) after therapy.
- No change reported 4 times before and after therapy.
- 6 Veterans reported Pain was worsened after the therapy.

Pain	Before Therapy	After Therapy
Mild (1-4)	7	17
Moderate (5-7)	20	4
Severe (8-10)	6	0
No record	27	
No pain after Therapy		19
Improved (no pain score)		14
Worsened		6

## Consideration/Limitation

- Healing Touch may be used with Veteran's expressed desire and clinical evaluation to create effective therapeutic environment and response.
- Should consider chronic illness, like chronic refractory pain syndrome or PTSD, is complex condition involving the mental, emotional, social, environmental and physical manifestation.
- More research is needed to proof Efficacy /Effectiveness for specific medical conditions and evidence-based practice.
- Set Credentialing and Privileging of providers and therapists in VA.
- Actively involved in budgetary discussion to initiate official CAM program and signed clinical location and staff.
- Consider VA serves a diverse and complex population with distinguished backgrounds and physical conditions.
- Set collaborative relationship among providers, referring positions, and Veterans.
- Set outcome measures for research data and follow up

## VA CAM Surveys

### 2002

123 facilities provide / refer CAM (84% of all VA facilities)

- 55 facilities provide CAM
- 56 provide / refer
- 12 facilities refer for CAM

Chiropractic care considered CAM

Most common CAM modality:

- Stress Management / Relaxation Therapy
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation
- Biofeedback
- Guided Imagery

### 2011

125 facilities provide / refer CAM (89% of all VA facilities)

- 81 facilities provide CAM
- 42 facilities provide / refer
- 2 facilities refer

Chiropractic not considered CAM

Most common CAM modalities:

- Acupuncture
- Meditation / yoga
- Stress Management / Relaxation Therapy
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation
- Biofeedback / Guided Imagery
- Energy Therapy