Studies on Healing Prayer – Cardiac Patients

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DR MITCHELL W Krucoff, Professor of Medicine/ cardiology and Director of the Cardiovascular Devices Unit at DUKE university also made a presentation on the MANTRA study project (Monitoring and Actualisation of Noetic Training), which examines the therapeutic effects of music, imagery, touch and prayers, projecting these as useful adjuncts to cardiovascular care. Cardiac patients who received intercessory prayer in addition to coronary stenting appeared to recover better than those treated with standard stenting therapy alone, according to researchers.

Noetic interventions are defined as "a healing influence performed without the use of a drug, device or surgical procedure," say researchers. Also referred to as "frontier medicine," these are widely practiced medical therapeutics including spiritual or prayerbased practices. A trained volunteer performed the other noetic therapies at the bedside of the patient, within one hour of the cardiac procedure.

The results of the 150-patient pilot study, which integrated noetic therapies like guided imagery, breath control, touch therapy, and offsite prayer with traditional ones, were promising. While increasingly popular outside of mainstream medicine, this is one of the first efforts to study the impact of noetic therapies using rigorous, scientific research methods, the results of which have been published in the American Heart Journal: Patients receiving noetic therapies( including long distance prayer in addition to their standard treatment) had 30 percent fewer complications overall; those who were treated with the doubleblinded, off-site prayers from eight prayer groups around the world had 50 percent fewer minor complications and 100 percent fewer major complications. "The data suggests that there may be a measurable therapeutic benefit related to noetic therapies in patients undergoing angioplasty," said Dr Krucoff.

It was established that noetic interventions help a patient achieve a state of calm equilibrium, or homeostasis, which puts them in a better state to help in their own recovery process. These results further suggested that using rigorous scientific methods to study the therapeutic value of prayer and other noetic interventions appears feasible and warrants larger- scale, more definitive investigations.

THE EMOTIONAL CONNECT

EVERY PHYSICIAN has had a patient who physiologically should have died, but didn't.

" These patients frequently appear to have a vital link that wouldn't ' let' them die -- and you usually don't have to look far to find a friend or family member, religious verse, or photo of a new grandchild," says Dr Krucoff. The opposite is true, as well, he notes: Patients without those vital links often don’t seem to do as well physically or emotionally, leading to interest in the human spirit as it relates to cardiology. Researchers are examining the role of internal resources patients may have to help themselves when they have cardiac problems, undergo procedures, heal, and recover. " Because the human spirit is a potentially critical contributor to their outcomes, we're very interested in the spiritual aspects of intervention so that we can best care for our patients," Krucoff says.

PRAYER MUST BE HEART- FELT

THOUSANDS of varieties of prayer exist, from chanting to confession, mantras, songs and dancing. In the MANTRA study cited above, off- site, intercessory prayer was provided by seven prayer groups of
varying denominations around the world. The groups included Buddhists, Catholics, Moravians, Jews, Fundamentalist Christians, Baptists and the Unity School of Christianity.

"The name, age and illness of each patient assigned to prayer therapy was sent to each prayer group," Crater said.

"These patients had prayers from all over the world said on their behalf for healing and recovery." A heartfelt loving intention is important for prayer's effectiveness.

Lynn McTaggart in her book The Intention Experiment reviews an exhaustive amount of research relating to intention, and says for this to be successful the sender must learn to quiet their mind and focus, as is done during meditation. A person also needs to tune into their object of intention by experiencing positive feelings towards the receiver.

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