

Letters to the editor

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THERAPEUTIC TOUCH

To the editor:

We read the Quinn study on "Therapeutic Touch as Energy Exchange: Testing the Theory" (ANS 6:2, 1984) with great interest. Her development of theorems for testing from Rogers's writings was very clearly described. Her review of literature and rationale led the reader to expect she would be testing the relationship between noncontact therapeutic touch (NCTT) and therapeutic touch with physical contact (TT).

Quinn makes the following statements in this article.

- "This study involved the derivation, testing and validation of the theorem that if the effects of TT result from energy exchange, NCTT will have the same effect as TT with physical contact." (p48)
- "The original question posed was whether NCTT would have the same effect on state anxiety as TT with physical contact." (p47)

In view of these statements, the reader is surprised to find the subjects divided into NCTT and NC (noncontact) experimental groups. The hypothesis does not follow from her rationale and review of literature. The

study tested the difference in the effect on state anxiety of NCTT and NC, rather than the relationship between the effects of NCTT and TT with physical contact.

Her finds might have been expressed with more confidence if she had included three groups in her study, TT with physical contact, NCTT and NC. The comparison of her findings with the findings of Heidt, while of interest, does not satisfy the necessity to structure the groups of subjects in ways that address the questions posed in her study.

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Author's response:

Berg and Garon quote correctly from page 47 in stating that "The original question posed was whether NCTT would have the same effect on state anxiety as TT with physical contact." This question provided the direction for the development of the study, which first appears on page 43. The specific question for this study, as stated on page 43, was "What is the effect of therapeutic touch without physical contact on state anxiety of hospitalized cardiovascular patients?" To answer this question, two groups were used; the first group received therapeutic touch without physical contact (NCTT), and the second group received noncontact (NC). The NC intervention was designed as a control for the effects of person and placebo and is a necessary component of experimental design. The hypothesis, consistent with experimental design, tests the difference in the outcome of the experimental and control interventions.

In testing the derived theorem that TT without physical contact will have the same

effect as TT with physical contact, the effect of TT with physical contact on anxiety is taken as axiomatic. As stated on page 44, "Since the effect of TT with physical contact on state anxiety is known, state anxiety can provide a measure of the efficacy of TT without physical contact." This statement provides further rationale for the hypothesis of the study.

The comparison of the Quinn and Heidt data is of more than passing interest, for it is in this comparison that the whole of the derived theorem is supported. The Heidt study tested the first part of the theorem (TT with physical contact) and the Quinn study tested the second part of the theorem (TT without contact). As stated on page 47, based on comparison of the two sets of findings, "the effects of TT with contact and those of NCTT on state anxiety appear to be virtually identical."

I would agree with Berg and Garon that the inclusion of a third group in the study design would have been useful but for different reasons than the authors suggest. The design used in the study quite specifically addresses

the problem statement for the study, as discussed earlier. The findings of the study present an answer to the question "What is the effect of TT without physical contact on state anxiety of hospitalized cardiovascular patients?" However, the inclusion of a TT with physical contact group would have allowed for a replication of Heidt's study, which would have been useful in further testing the effects of TT on anxiety. Although the focus of the present study was on the means by which the effects of TT are obtained, further efforts to document outcomes of TT are necessary and in progress.

I wish to thank Ms. Berg and Ms. Garon for their thoughtful comments and feedback, which provided this opportunity to clarify some aspects of the study.

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