

Can Reiki Help with Parkinson's Disease?



About 10 million people worldwide suffer from Parkinson's disease. That number is sure to go up, especially in countries where the population is aging, as the malady most often afflicts people over 50. Moreover, the risk increases with age. There's no known cure for Parkinson's at the moment, but there are treatments that can make life with Parkinson's more manageable. Reiki healing may be one of them.

About Parkinson's

Parkinson's disease is a brain disorder that results in tremors, muscle stiffness, slow awkward movement and a loss of balance and coordination. Parkinson's patients are susceptible to falls. The symptoms tend to worsen over time. There can sometimes be difficulty in walking and talking, along with mental and behavioral issues such as depression, difficulty sleeping, fatigue and memory loss.

The cause of Parkinson's disease is poorly understood. It onsets when brain neurons that produce dopamine become impaired and die. Scientists don't know why they do this. When the brain produces less dopamine, problems with movement begin to appear.

Standard Parkinson's Treatment Options

According to health officials and most physicians, there is no cure at present, no known way of actually healing Parkinson's disease, but there are treatments that can mitigate the severity of the symptoms and prevent the symptoms from worsening as rapidly. The principal treatment is medication. Levodopa is a drug that helps neurons produce dopamine and make up for the body's reduced supply. Another drug, carbidopa, is used in conjunction with levodopa to reduce its side effects.

Lifestyle therapy is useful in managing Parkinson's symptoms. This can include physical, occupational and speech therapy, as well as encouraging a healthy diet. Strength training can improve muscle function and help patients improve balance and coordination. Disciplines such as yoga and tai chi may help with balance and flexibility.

Depression and stress are factors that can work against Parkinson's treatment and reduce its effectiveness. On the other hand, energy and attitude are key to dealing positively with Parkinson's symptoms. That's why life energy therapy such as Reiki may be able to help.

What is Reiki?

Reiki is a healing therapy that originated in Japan centuries ago. It involves laying hands on a body to channel energy and to release the free flow of energy within that body. Reiki holds that life force energy abounds in the world and flows through bodies to make people alive. When that energy is high, a person tends to be happy and healthy. When it's low, a person can be susceptible to disease, and recovery from disease becomes more difficult.

The treatment is sometimes referred to Reiki massage, although it really isn't massage and it's not like physical therapeutic massage with its deep rubbing. Instead, a person sits in a chair or lies on a table, fully clothed, and the practitioner lays hands on the body in several specific vital spots, pausing them there long enough for the energy flow to take place.

Most people become relaxed by the end of a Reiki session and feel stress melting away. Sometimes they feel tingling or pulsing as Reiki stimulates body vibrations. Reiki may help enable people to better deal with physical difficulties such as the symptoms of Parkinson's disease.

Benefits of Reiki for Parkinson's Sufferers

Reiki therapy is not a standalone treatment for managing Parkinson's symptoms, but is meant as a complement to traditional medical methods of managing the disease. Research suggests that Reiki may have value as a complementary therapy that works to increase the effectiveness of standard treatments for a number of diseases, including neurodegenerative disorders. A paper in the NIH National Library of Medicine examined 61 articles in available literature and concluded that there is evidence that Reiki may help with pain and anxiety.

Most of the evidence in favor of Reiki for Parkinson's Disease comes in the form of anecdotes from real individuals who have benefited from Reiki massage. One reason for this is that people facing the difficulty of Parkinson's and its treatments are often confronted with fear, uncertainty and stress. Anything that alleviates these negative emotions can not only help the body deal directly with the disease but also increase the effectiveness of medication and other therapies.

Parkinson's Europe, the European Parkinson's umbrella organization, has conducted some limited studies that show Reiki can help with mood, depression and pain relief. Some think that's because Reiki promotes a feeling of well-being and a sense of being in control. Reiki Masters contend that it may possibly help channel energy to the part of the brain that regulates dopamine production. It may help to deliver Parkinson's medication more effectively to where it's needed.

While there needs to be more formal studies on Reiki and Parkinson's, there is anecdotal evidence from Parkinson's sufferers who have received Reiki therapy. There are reports that Reiki has improved mood, reduced depression, relieved anxiety, promoted cognitive alertness, improved emotional state, promoted general calmness and infused patients with a sense of control.

Reiki: A Non-Invasive Therapy with Potential

While medication and general therapy have made great strides in helping people with Parkinson's disease, they're only part of the complete answer for managing symptoms. They are the main part but not the full answer as they may be enhanced with supportive treatments such as Reiki. Given the uncertainty of Parkinson's treatment and the lack of actual cures, there's no reason not to try Reiki therapy. It's a non-invasive treatment that can't do harm and in many cases appears to be of some help.

Stress and anxiety are factors that have the potential to make Parkinson's symptoms worse, while calmness and a sense of well-being will often slow the progression of the disease. It stands to reason that anything that reduces stress and promotes well-being, such as Reiki treatment, has the potential to be a valuable tool.