



Healing Touch Program comes to Mission Hospital

Part 1: The Beginnings

by Anne Boyd, MDiv., HTCP/I, DALF/I

In 2008, Mission Hospital of Asheville, North Carolina chose Healing Touch Program as part of their Integrative Health Care Program. Mission is an 800 bed hospital on a 90 acre campus, employing over 1,800 Registered Nurses.

Healing Touch, which slowly progressed at Mission Hospital over the years, began in 1996 when two RNs, Cindy Barkei from Cardiology and Lydia Luka from Oncology became Healing Touch Certified Practitioners -- determined to practice and foster The Work whenever possible. Cindy had been named one of North Carolina's Top 100 Nurses that year. The two had already formed a local support group (with a mission statement). What could they accomplish at Mission Hospital?

Cindy, who earlier had part of her HT tuition paid by an empathetic nurse manager, began coordinating classes locally for Instructor Jane Hightower of Georgia. Later, I partnered with her and we began scheduling classes of two levels per venue so that both classes could be listed on one flyer to reduce advertising expense, as well as, possibly reduce meeting room costs.

Both Cindy and Lydia talked about HT with coworkers - those who were open to it - at every chance. "A good number even requested help." Lydia said. In Cindy's unit, HT was gratefully received by an often stressed, overworked staff, and was offered unobtrusively to patients.

"I recall an instance," Cindy said, "of a young man with a collapsed lung who had a chest tube inserted to re-expand the lung. He had received pain medication, yet complained of pain.

As I passed my hand over his upper back, I asked him where he felt the pain. When he said 'there' I did a *Pain Drain*. In a few minutes, he said, 'It's gone.' He was very surprised. I told him it was a technique I learned in a class (I didn't use the term Healing Touch as it was not accepted at that time.) Instead I said, 'I know something that will help you relax -- help ease your pain.'"

Later, Cindy found an opportunity to propose a research project for bedside care incorporating Healing Touch and other modalities to create a Healing Arts department. While the proposal was flatly rejected at the time, one person, who was impressed with her plan, would contact her later.

Lydia often offered Healing Touch during patients' chemotherapy that lasted from 20 to 60 minutes. "Gowned and gloved, you don't get beeped during that time."

During these years, Lydia often assisted dying patients. She told of one in particular. "I had cared for the gentleman and felt he would die in a day or two." But a week later she found him still there - unresponsive yet suffering, his respirations labored. Was he being held emotionally, she wondered? Had the family said goodbyes? She was assured yes, but the family's painful visits had ceased.

Lydia asked for guidance, and set an intention that she not be paged for 30 minutes - a rare thing in Oncology. She ceremoniously bathed him - and then did a *Chakra Spread*. Amazingly, there were no interruptions. The gentleman's respirations immediately eased and he seemed totally at peace. "I was surprised

- almost shocked - that it worked so fast”, she said. Within an hour he had passed on. “This experience gave me a new and deeper respect for the technique and The Work.”

Other opportunities for Healing Touch included presentations to the American Operating Room Nurses Association, to local retirement communities, health fairs, and other gatherings. By 2002 Lydia Luka had become a Family Nurse Practitioner and left Mission to work for an Integrative Medicine physician, where she could practice Healing Touch. Later she became a nursing instructor, and then Director of Nursing Education.

Cindy remained at Mission Hospital, continuing to quietly offer HT - until something notable happened. The same person, who had earlier been impressed with her Healing Arts research proposal, invited Cindy to join the newly formed Integrative Nursing Initiative (INI) committee to investigate complimentary therapies for Mission Hospital.

Yes, it seemed things were finally moving forward. At monthly meetings Cindy enthusiastically presented Healing Touch statistics and research results, placing an emphasis on the Certification process and the fact that the program is a standardized curriculum. Healing Touch and other energy modalities were “on the table” for over a year – which dragged to two years.

In 2007, Cindy was on the way to a committee meeting, feeling discouraged that they'd been “going around in circles with no progress.” She decided to resign from the committee and carry on alone. But someone new was at that meeting - Lourdes Lorenz, who when introductions were given, asked each member to expound on their specialties. Cindy told of her certifications in Healing Touch and Holistic Nursing. It was announced that Lourdes had been hired to form and direct an Integrative Health Care Program. “And,” she stated to the committee, “I am here to answer your prayers.”

Cindy understood that her prayers for energy medicine – most especially - Healing Touch at Mission Hospital - were being answered. “The time was finally right.” Committee meetings were action-oriented. Lourdes' team ploughed through the paperwork of policies and procedures to justify using energy modalities

including Healing Touch, guided imagery, biofeedback, aromatherapy, massage, breathing techniques, acupuncture, etc.

With that, Cindy Barkei was named Mission Hospital's first Integrative Health Care Nurse - another dream come true for her. But what about Healing Touch?

Lourdes wanted Healing Touch classes to begin without delay but who would teach? She preferred a nurse-instructor and employee-candidate Denise Anthes, RN, was an HT Instructor in Training but not yet certified. I was delighted that Healing Touch was coming to Mission Hospital but alternately sad not to be a part of it. Although I have been a HT certified instructor for more than 15 years, I am not a nurse. I came to accept What Was.

However, through the Grace of Higher Power, with Cindy and Denise as my advocates, Lourdes made the decision that I would teach the first classes until Denise could take over. I was totally blown away! Denise coordinates all classes, and earlier this year completed her solo class toward Instructor Certification. Monthly classes are now ongoing.

I have been honored to teach and help this program expand. At the end of 2009, 10 lower level classes will have been taught, and Asheville's first ever Levels 4 and 5 will be held in December and next spring. Classes have been offered to all personnel including those of other hospitals and the public. Best of all, Mission is blessed with nurses who can offer HT and other energy work openly and efficiently and have the benefit of computer documented nurse's notes. The feedback has been excellent.

The best is ahead as Healing Touch continues to grow and thrive along with other energy modalities at Mission Hospital.

[Next installment of the Healing Touch - Mission story, will include strategies of promotion and education; ways to deal with those who reject energy therapy; information about Introduction to Healing Touch and Self-Care classes; Nurses retreats that feature energy sessions for nursing personnel as “new energy” boosters and Mission's long range plans. Stay tuned.]

Your questions and/or comments on the above article are invited and will be noted by Cindy, Anne and Denise -- address to Anne Boyd, Homelight@aol.com

About the author:

Anne, after 25 years as Spiritual study group leader, and Shaman Journey presenter, was trained in the 80's by Janet Mentgen and her core group; and became Certified as Healing Touch Instructor and Practitioner. She has been teaching since, in the U.S. and as volunteer to Romania over several years. She also teaches Life Force Healing and other energy work. And she adds Reikli Master, Hypnotherapist, and Intuitive Healer/Consultant credentials, to her practice. In 2006 she earned a Master of Divinity Degree and was ordained Minister of Peace with the Beloved Community.

Anne traveled with Janet Mentgen and an HT teaching group to Australia/New Zealand three times in HT's early years..and was inspired to draw angels; later created quilted energy pillows and gemstone pendulums.