



Healing Touch

An Integrative Therapy in Outpatient Oncology

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Hickman Cancer Center at ProMedica Flower Hospital in Sylvania, Ohio, provides comprehensive outpatient oncology services to patients from prevention through treatment and beyond. As the hub for ProMedica Cancer Institute, Hickman Cancer Center served over 3,800 newly diagnosed cancer patients at ProMedica facilities throughout a 27-county service area in northwest Ohio and southeast Michigan during 2013.

In addition to high-quality clinical care, multiple supportive services are provided to patients, including Healing Care. The Healing Care Program provides complementary services that support oncology patients and their caregiver(s) throughout treatment and for two years after treatment. These include group classes - such as yoga, Nia and aromatherapy - and - one-on-one sessions that include Healing Touch, Guided Imagery, aromatherapy or a combination of these therapies. In addition, practitioners often integrate prayer, meditation and/or breathing exercises as part of the session. Practitioners assist individuals with physical, mental, emotional and spiritual concerns, such as lack of energy, nausea, discomfort, anxiety, stress, and/or balance.

The Healing Care Program is staffed by two registered nurses and one licensed practical nurse (approximately one full-time position), who have a variety of holistic experience. All three nurses are trained in Healing Touch and two are certified practitioners; all have aromatherapy education with two completing certification; two have specialized education in

guided imagery; one is educated in Qi Gong and one is certified as a Nia (holistic exercise) instructor. Together, they have over 40 years of experience in providing complementary therapies to patients.

Patients are introduced to the Healing Care Program through a brochure they receive at patient orientation. As part of patient-caregiver-nursing interactions, it is common for the nurses to discuss the complementary services available through the Program. Patients and caregivers can self-refer or can be referred by someone from their healthcare team. In 2013, nearly 600 people participated in group classes and 340 received one-on-one sessions. In addition, over 1,000 patients received massage therapy by an oncology-certified therapist during chemotherapy. This service was provided through a collaborative agreement with The Victory Center.

The Victory Center is a local, non-profit organization whose mission is to support and educate cancer patients and those closest to them by providing individual and group services in northwest Ohio and southeast Michigan. Since 1996 The Victory Center has been reaching out to cancer patients and their families - providing love, support, compassion, hope and laughter. Healing Care practitioners provide weekly services, including Healing Touch and group classes, at The Victory Center. This collaboration strengthens services that benefit people with a cancer diagnosis throughout the community and surrounding areas.



The Healing Care Program has also partnered with a local church and senior center to reach cancer survivors in the community through education and hands-on experience of complementary therapies. Through the partnership with another local church, a two-part workshop was held for survivors in a high-need community.¹ The attendees learned how complementary therapies could support their physical, emotional and spiritual needs and had the opportunity to experience specific therapies that included Nia, art expression, meditation, guided imagery, journaling and aromatherapy.

breast cancer. A third study, which is almost completed, is evaluating the effects of home-based journaling on quality of life in breast cancer patients.

At the inception of the Healing Care Program only Guided Imagery was offered. The program expanded in 2006 with the addition of Healing Touch. Later, aromatherapy was introduced as a complement to guided imagery and Healing Touch to enhance relaxation and therapy benefits. Healing Touch soon became a popular modality offered alone or in conjunction with other modalities.

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Another partnership, with a local senior center, integrated cancer prevention education with self-awareness and introspective awareness activities. The cancer prevention material and overall well-being education was presented through programs by a registered nurse along with guest speakers who shared their experience as either a survivor or caregiver. To help foster self-awareness and introspective awareness, opportunities to walk a labyrinth and receive laying-on of hands with prayer were offered at each program.

The Healing Care Program is actively engaged in research studies exploring the benefits of Nia and journaling. Nia is a holistic fitness program that blends elements from the dance arts, martial arts and healing arts. The first Nia study found that Nia helped to reduce fatigue in women with breast cancer.²

Another Nia study is currently enrolling participants to further explore the benefits of Nia in women with

Currently, over 20 Healing Touch sessions are provided to patients and caregivers per month. In the beginning the numbers were much lower - not because of lack of patient or caregiver need - but because of the clinical staff's lack of awareness. That was resolved by offering *Introduction to Healing Touch* presentations to front desk staff and nurses. Participants were given an overview of Healing Touch and the benefits to cancer patients and included hands-on practice where all participants had the opportunity to give and receive a Healing Touch treatment. After this, the nursing and front desk staff had a better understanding of Healing Touch, and as a result, referrals increased - leading to the current success of the program. Today, the Healing Care practitioners, front desk staff and nurses work together to meet the needs of the patients and caregivers.

Healing Touch sessions take place in an office that has been designed to promote healing and relaxation.

