



## Energy Medicine Research: A Call to Action, Part 2

In last issue's Practitioner Development column,<sup>1</sup> Dr. Rolle-Berg outlined the importance of evidence-based research to our quest to transform medicine into a model inclusive of Energy Medicine (EM) modalities. As I see it, research is the foundation upon which we EM practitioners move into partnership with other medical professionals and gain a consistent place on the client's health care team.

The obvious question... how do you actually start a research project?

Right from the get-go, choose a good topic. Here is a topic: the effects of post-operative Healing Touch on anesthesia-induced memory loss. So, what makes a good topic? There are four criteria that describe topics that weather peer-review scrutiny: practicality, curiosity, ethics and significance.

A practical study is cost-effective and timely, and accomplished fairly easily with known technical personnel, analysis help and an available participant pool. Your curiosity about the study's results must keep you engaged while the possible study results will assist you in gathering research funding. Participant safety is always priority-one. Our Code of Ethics and the Institutional Review Board overseeing the study will require that your study pose no harm to participants and

that, ethically, they are fully informed and sign their participation consent. Lastly, research is traditionally designed to fill a gap in scientific knowledge. Thus, new results should be significant, expanding existing evidence, extending scientific knowledge and spurring additional scientific advances.

How do you learn about the scientific knowledge gaps of your topic?

The internet, of course! But it will take time, patience, perseverance and access. Once you have chosen a topic, conducting a search via Google and Google Scholar will net you a list of papers, pdfs and websites connected to the topic. Researchers often publish multiple papers on a topic of research. Input their names into Google Scholar to locate other current papers they have published. Examining the reference list within the papers you locate is another pointer to other authors who have published on or around your topic, helping you to further narrow in and better define your topic's existing research boundaries.

PubMed ([www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/)), PsycINFO ([www.psycnet.apa.org/](http://www.psycnet.apa.org/)), Medscape ([www.medscape.com/](http://www.medscape.com/)), and Cochrane Reviews ([www.community.cochrane.org](http://www.community.cochrane.org)) are websites hosting search engines dedicated to biomedical, life science and health policy research. PubMed is free and funded by the National Institutes of Health, offering access to peer-reviewed abstracts and some full-text articles from the MEDLINE database of references. PsycINFO is a database of abstracts of literature from the 1800s to the present in the field of psychology, produced by the American Psychological Association. Medscape offers medical information free of charge for both professionals and non-professionals. The Cochrane Reviews are systematic reviews of primary research (including areas of EM) and are recognized as the highest standard in evidence-based health care.

And do not forget your own alma mater. Many colleges and universities offer alumni access to online references and databases (that they pay for), if you are willing to travel to the school and do your database search on campus. Lastly, consider joining other professional associations like the American Holistic Nurses Association ([www.ahna.org/](http://www.ahna.org/)). As a member benefit, you receive print editions of the Journal of Holistic Nursing (JHN) detailing the latest research and free online access to JHN archives.

Once you have examined a few research papers, you will recognize the general structure of a high quality scientific paper: abstract, introduction, methods, results, discussion and



references. The abstract summarizes the study process, results and conclusions. The introduction defines the research gap by summarizing the previous topic research including relevant results. The purpose of the study and the hypothesis/research question follow. The methods section details exactly what materials were used, procedures followed and data collection methods utilized to control bias (i.e., the process where the scientist performing research influences the results in order to deliver a certain outcome). Clarity is very important in this section such that future researchers can replicate the process and its results. Study findings are detailed in the results section, using a combination of text, statistics, graphs, themes, quotes, a theory and a model. The author's interpretation of the results and its relationship to previous research follow in the discussion section along with possible study limitations and future research directions. The reference section, a goldmine for new researchers in a topic area, includes a bibliography of research studies cited throughout the paper.

Learning to evaluate the quality of research papers will not be easy. Questioning evidence takes courage as it forces us to face our beliefs or what we think of as truth. Nevertheless, it is a skill worth cultivating. Quality research papers will be

systematic, controlled, bias-free and replicable.

There is a definite method to research madness. Sticking with the structure outlined above and choosing a topic that grabs your interest will truly help you meet and beat the challenges of doing scientific research. In part 3, we discuss how to conduct a research study. €



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#### References

1. Rolle-Berg, R. (2016). Energy medicine research: A call to action, Part 1. *Energy Magazine*, (85). Retrieved from <http://www.energymagazineonline.com>