



Energy Healing: An Alternative Medicine or an Alternative to Medicine?

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

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Dear editor,

For centuries, health and healing have been central to human survival and progress. Modern medicine rooted in scientific inquiry, pharmacology, and advanced technology has undeniably saved millions of lives. Vaccines, antibiotics, surgical procedures, and cutting-edge diagnostics stand as towering achievements of conventional medicine. Yet, alongside this scientific dominance, there persists a parallel stream of healing practices often grouped under the umbrella of alternative medicine. Among these, energy healing a practice grounded in the belief that life force or bioenergy can influence health has gained growing attention and controversy alike [1]. The question worth examining is whether energy healing should be seen merely as an alternative medicine that complements conventional treatments, or as an alternative to medicine in itself.

Alternative medicine, sometimes termed complementary or integrative medicine, encompasses a wide spectrum: herbal therapies, acupuncture, chiropractic care, meditation, yoga, homeopathy, and energy-based practices [2]. While some of these modalities have gained partial validation through clinical trials, others remain on the fringe of scientific acceptance. The global rise in interest toward alternative medicine has multiple drivers. Firstly, concerns regarding certain aspects of

modern medicine, such as rising costs, the often-impersonal nature of hospital care, and potential side effects are notable at various levels. Second, the cultural revival of traditional knowledge systems, from Ayurveda in India to Traditional Chinese Medicine, has legitimized practices that were once dismissed as outdated. Third, in an era increasingly defined by general wellness, people seek healing that addresses mind, body, and spirit is something modern biomedicine often overlooks. Energy healing, in particular, has thrived under this wave. Practices such as Reiki, Pranic healing, Qi Gong, and Therapeutic Touch have found adherents across continents, including in highly industrialized nations with advanced healthcare systems [3].

Energy healing views humans as more than physical bodies surrounded by refined life forces whose blockages can manifest as illness. By balancing this energy, practitioners aim to restore health and vitality. Traditions describe it as prana in India, qi in China, ki in Japan, and “biofield” in Western thought. Techniques vary Reiki channels energy through hands, Pranic healing cleanses energy centers, and Qi Gong uses movement and breath but all link health with energy balance [4]. Various modalities such as sound therapy, sound bowl therapy, Tibetan singing bowls, color

therapy, hijama (cupping), and reflexology are widely recognized as useful approaches within the field of energy healing. The greatest challenge is measurability: “refined energy” cannot be directly captured by modern instruments. Critics call it placebo, yet some studies show reduced pain, stress, and improved recovery outcomes. Evidence remains mixed, but benefits in comfort and quality of life are frequently reported [5].

Energy healing is increasingly accepted as a supportive approach, not a replacement.³ Hospitals in the US, Canada, and Europe allow Reiki or Healing Touch in cancer care, surgery, and palliative settings, mainly to reduce stress and pain [6]. The Institute of Noetic Sciences, a nonprofit scientific research center and experiential lab, focuses on exploring the intersection of science and profound human experience. Similarly, the HeartMath Institute offers practical solutions to reduce stress, enhance energy and resilience, and restore mental, emotional, and physical balance. Both serve as recognized examples of organizations working in the field of energy healing technology. Problems arise when healing replaces evidence-based medicine. Choosing Reiki over chemotherapy or Pranic healing over antibiotics can have fatal outcomes. Authorities stress it should support, not substitute, proven treatments. Its scope remains significant. It may reduce stress, anxiety, and depression, provide relief for chronic pain or terminal illness, promote resilience and balance as part of wellness practices, and strengthen cultural and spiritual identity. It is already highlighted that, meditation offers similar benefits by calming the mind, reducing stress, and activating the body’s relaxation response. It enhances emotional balance, focus, and overall well-being, underscoring the importance of integrating mind-body practices into modern life [7].

The future lies in integration: rigorous studies, openness to cultural wisdom, and respect for patient autonomy. Energy healing is not a cure-all but can enrich healthcare by addressing body, mind, and spirit. It has value as an alternative medicine but risk as an alternative to medicine. Practiced responsibly alongside modern care, it reminds us that healing is about wholeness not just eliminating disease.

Competing interests

The author declares no competing interests.

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