



September 2021

Volume 21, No. 2

Commentary

A Need for Comprehensive Research Standards for Energy Modalities

By Caitlin A. Connor, DAOM, EHP-C

Research into energy work has progressed significantly since it first began, to the point where there are now over 15,000 peer reviewed and published journal articles on energy work across the world. This means that there are enough studies to constitute the beginnings of an evidence base. Unfortunately this in no way means that the need for research into energy work has diminished, but rather that it will need to become more focused. As an individual reads through some of those 15,000 articles, a few issues become apparent. Paramount among these is the need for reporting standards specific to this field of research. Many of the articles are missing key information about the types of practitioners utilized, including the types of modalities used, the lineage, the number of years the individual had practiced, and many other factors which could impact the level of competence of the practitioner. In addition, a lack of clear information on whether practitioners were limited to study participants or were also allowed to work on family members, study team members, hospital staff (if relevant) become especially in the significantly in the many different situations required during a research study.

There has been an ongoing movement in research since CONSORT standards were first written, to identify areas of reporting in research, that were consistently weak. This initially resulted in a revision of CONSORT, which was published in 2010. It has since been followed by a number of different types of standards, both for different research designs, such as the Cluster Trial extension which was updated in 2012, and STRICTA, the specific standards for reporting in acupuncture trials, which was updated in 2010, when it became an official extension of CONSORT. In 2014, the CONSORT group also published a set of standards for reporting on interventions in research, named TIDieR. Unfortunately, the standards stated in TIDieR, though very helpful, were written to apply to a broad area of research, specifically both pharmacological and non-pharmacological forms of interventions in research, which has lead to the stated standards being too broad to cover the required level of nuance for accurate replication in energy work

research. For example Item 5 on the TIDieR list of information which should be included on an intervention in a research article, covers information about the provider. However, this Item specifically is looking at any pre-existing skills or expertise which may have been required for the provider, any specific training given to the provider, if there was any assessment of the providers skill level, and how any potential providers who might fail such an assessment were handled. This simply does not cover the level of detail needed for a properly reproducible reporting of an energy work research study.

The required level of detail in TIDieR would include that the practitioner was a Reiki practitioner, or a Shaman, or a Spiritual Healer, but would not include the lineage of those practitioners. It would not include distinguishing types of information within specific styles of practice. For example: A shaman is not "attuned" to a specific set of symbols. A reiki practitioner could be "attuned" to any of 156 different types of Reiki and combinations of symbols. Likewise a Qigong practitioner will often use the meridian system to assess the client and a Spiritual practitioner would not. An equivalent to this is to ask the same information when comparing studies using a psychologist working on PTSD to a study using surgeons specializing in eye repair. Different kinds and types of information are necessary to properly enable replication of studies. Similar to acupuncture and the creation of STRICTA, energy work research has specific information which is necessary, and would not generally be obvious to the scientist not versed in this area of research. We need research reporting standards specific to energy work to support progress, quality, reliability, repeatability and extension.

Bio:

Dr. Caitlin Connor, DAOM holds a bachelors degree from Mount Holyoke College with a dual focus in political science and anthropology, a masters degree in acupuncture and oriental medicine from Arizona School of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine and a doctorate in Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine from California Institute for Integral Studies/American College of Traditional Chinese Medicine. Dr. Connor was the *ISSSEEM 2011* gold medal winner of the *Rustum Roy Emerging Scientist Award* for undergraduates, the 2016 *Bernard Grad Emerging Scientist* silver medal winner for graduate students and a 2018 *inaugural Patricia Norris Emerging Scientist* gold medal. Trained in a

variety of energy systems, styles and techniques since she was three, Dr. Connor has just completed a diploma in health care sciences research training at University of Oxford, UK. Dr. Connor is the current vice-president of the board of directors of the National Certification Center of Energy Practitioners in the US (www.nccoep.org).



TERMS OF USE

The International Journal of Healing and Caring is distributed electronically as an open access journal, available at no charge. You may print your downloaded

copy of this article or any other article for relaxed reading. We encourage you to share this article with friends and colleagues.

The International Journal of Healing and Caring
C/O National Alliance of Energy Healing
31907 South Davis Ranch Rd.
Marana, AZ 85658

Email: ijhcjournal@earthlink.net Website: <http://www.ijhc.org>

Copyright © 2021 IJHC, NAOEP and Caitlin A. Connor. All rights reserved.

DISCLAIMER: <http://ijhc.org/disclaimer/>