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OPINION

Can Artificial Intelligence replace Reiki practitioners?

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Abstract

In the last few years, the idea of using artificial intelligence (AI) to aid, or even replace, energy healing practitioners, has received increasing attention in the press and online. Examples of AI implementation that have been proposed include tailoring a Reiki session in response to minute-by-minute physiological changes in a recipient as recorded from wearable sensors; using data to predict when someone might need Reiki; optimising the environment of the healing space according to the current mood or level of arousal of the recipient; using AI to generate and display symbols and visualizations appropriate to the needs of the client; and to create virtual healers trained in Reiki teachings to guide potential users through healing sessions by means of computerised conversational interfaces. The goals of this opinion piece are to describe such examples in more detail with reference to a sample or publications from the literature and to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of each one from the perspective of an experienced Reiki Master practitioner.

Keywords: Reiki, Artificial Intelligence, Energy Healing, Biofield

Introduction

The following article pertains to most, if not all, energy healing modalities, but because the author is a Reiki Master practitioner and has most familiarity with that type of energy healing, the wording is oriented towards Reiki. Reiki is a biofield

therapy, usually involving close contact with the recipient, where practitioners serve as passive conduits for an energy that stimulates healing responses. Reiki can also be performed remote from the recipient. Although there is mounting evidence that Reiki works through the

autonomic nervous and endocrine systems (Baldwin, 2020), the source of the energy and how it may be directed to clients remotely are still unknown quantities.

What is AI? According to International Business Machines Corporation, “AI is technology that enables computers and machines to simulate human learning, comprehension, problem solving, decision making, creativity and autonomy” (www.ibm.com/think/topics/artificial-intelligence). So, how can AI assist, or even replace, a Reiki practitioner? As a start, AI has no energy. It cannot feel the state of the client during a session. It does not understand what it means to place hands over the heart and sense what is held there. It has no lived experience of grief, healing, insight or spiritual awakening. It cannot transmit Reiki.

However, as detailed in this article, there are several ways that AI may enhance Reiki sessions, both for the practitioner and for the recipient. Reiki has always been an evolving practice. Mikao Usui, the founder of Usui Reiki, and the teachers who followed him, actively improved the system of Reiki in various ways to make it more accessible to their students. In present times Reiki practitioners often supplement sessions with music, crystals or aromatherapy to enhance their clients' experience.

According to Grover (2025): “The rise of AI and biofeedback technologies opens up new avenues for monitoring, analysing, and potentially augmenting Reiki sessions.”

“Although a healer's intuition or spiritual knowledge has historically been the foundation of energy healing, artificial intelligence (AI) offers new features like accessibility, real-time feedback, pattern identification, and personalization.”

How valuable will these new features be to Reiki practitioners working with their clients?

This article presents new technologies that may give AI the potential to raise Reiki to another level by accessing physiological data from clients during sessions. The data could then be fed back to the practitioner who could use it, together with Reiki wisdom, to enhance each client's experience. Alternatively, the data could be used directly by AI to create visuals and/or soundscapes which it may predict will improve a client's preset goals, such as relaxation, invigoration, increased strength or reduced fatigue, or even to start a conversation with a client about their health needs and options. The advantages and disadvantages of incorporating clients' physiological data into Reiki sessions and allowing AI to make decisions regarding sensory and conversational input to clients are also discussed with reference to both practitioners and clients.

Use of measurable devices to determine physiological effects of Reiki

As a research scientist I am very excited by the availability of new technology to easily monitor clients' physiological responses to Reiki and to use the information to uniquely tailor the healing sessions to their needs. According to a blog from Reelmind.ai, “AI in Reiki: Energy Healing with Machine Learning” (reelmind.ai/blog/ai-in-reiki-energy-healing-with-machine-learning), “wearable devices now sync with AI platforms to measure heart rate variability (HRV), skin conductance (GSR), and brainwave patterns during Reiki sessions. Machine learning models process this data in real-time to adjust healing techniques.”

It is true that physiological measures such as HRV have been measured in research settings before, during and after Reiki (Friedman et al, 2010; Diaz-Rodriguez et al, 2011), and

many individuals track their daily HRV via wearable technologies such as Oura rings, Whoop bands, or Apple Watches. In addition, electroencephalogram (EEG) measurements of a diverse group of energy healers showed that alpha power brainwaves, associated with a meditative state, increased in power in healers and recipients during healing sessions (Acosta-Urquidi, 2014). However, currently there is no single wearable device that can record HRV, GSR and EEG simultaneously. In addition, accurate, medical grade measures of EEG can only be obtained using hard helmets with multiple electrodes attached to the scalp. Fortunately, for Reiki practitioners with limited scientific training, headbands are available for clients that can adequately detect changes in their brainwaves using signals from the prefrontal cortex and temporal lobes. In addition, Smartwatches can track their HRV and GSR.

Regarding the use of AI to process these signals and guide the practitioner to modify the healing process, a review article based on data from 15 studies employing mindfulness, yoga, biofeedback, meditation, Qigong and Tai Chi concluded that AI-driven mind-body medicine techniques are associated with a significant improvement in mental and physiological health outcomes and that AI interventions have immense scope in upgrading classic mind-body techniques by delivering truly personalized, adaptive, and timely interventions (Nadaf and Jabade, 2026). However, no studies involving Reiki were included in the review. In addition, the authors recommend that further research and consideration are warranted to overcome ethical concerns and biases.

A question that I pose is, will continuous attention to input from AI distract Reiki practitioners from tuning into Reiki's inner wisdom, closely observing and sensing changes in the

recipient and following their own intuition? It is possible that more may be lost from the lack of a genuine connection to Reiki and to the client than will be gained from watching continuous input about the client from AI.

Predictive analysis for preventative healing

One interesting potential use of AI in Reiki is to predict when a client might need Reiki. For example, if machine learning analyses historical session data from a regular client over months or years, an algorithm might flag seasonal anxiety patterns, perhaps due to weather or seasonal behaviour changes and recommend pre-emptive Reiki sessions. On the other hand, a Reiki practitioner might reach the same conclusion through close observation of, and conversation with, the client. Nevertheless, the AI contribution here could be a useful back-up.

Optimizing the healing environment

Artificial Intelligence optimizes Reiki healing environments by dynamically adjusting atmospheric variables, such as lighting, sound frequencies, and temperature, based on continual feedback from sensors attached to the client. By incorporating smart technology in this way, AI would aim to create a highly responsive space that deepens relaxation and reduces physiological and emotional stress. For example, AI tools that track changes in a client's HRV can automatically generate specific binaural beats or solfeggio sound frequencies to transition the brain into alpha or theta brain wave states. Smart biometric lighting can adjust hue and intensity dynamically as the practitioner moves from the root chakra toward the crown, changing from warm tones to indigo or violet. Micro-sensors can detect localized decreases in skin temperature and activate infrared table warmers

automatically. Smart aromatherapy diffusers can release tailored essential oil blends (like lavender for calming) based on the client's real-time stress markers. Although on the surface such options sound enticing, the whole concept relies on the assumption that the client requires total comfort and complete relaxation. However, it is quite possible that some clients need to get out of their comfort zone in order to evolve and to grow.

Generation of symbols and visualizations

Reiki symbols are traditionally drawn by hand to activate energy. Artificial Intelligence tools, such as Reelmind.ai automate this process, and can generate high-fidelity symbols in various styles. However, it is not clear exactly how this would benefit the practitioner or the recipient. Part of the power from the symbols is evoked by the practitioner drawing them in the air or on paper or picturing them in their mind. Having AI automatically produce beautiful renditions of the symbols removes this power from the practitioner. Regarding the recipient, it is not common practice for them to actually see the symbols. On the other hand, when using the AI tools, practitioners can input intentions, such as peace or strength, and the AI produces symbols embodying those qualities using infused color based on psychology principles. This might be helpful to some practitioners.

Creation of virtual healers

On August 30th 2024, Forbes featured an article written by AI scientist and consultant Dr. Lance B. Eliot, entitled "Making use of generative AI to perform energy healing mind-body therapy," which explored how AI language models can act as virtual energy healing and Reiki practitioners. He stated that "Generative AI tools can be explicitly prompted to act as energy healing coaches, guiding users

through intent-driven, meditative, and self-healing framework."

One thing to note here is the use of the term "healing coach", rather than healer. As mentioned previously, AI has no energy, it cannot transmit Reiki and it has no senses. All the talk about AI acting as a virtual distance healer etc. is meaningless because there is no way that energy healing can be happening in this case. I imagine that an AI "virtual healer" session would be more like an online meditation. It might significantly improve relaxation but not through Reiki energy. It might even trigger some emotional insights in the client by analysing how they respond physiologically to certain words and phrases. However, such insights have nothing to do with Reiki. We still do not know all the subtleties and capabilities of Reiki, and if we depend overly on AI this could draw us away from increasing our understanding and knowledge. Research shows that the benefits of Reiki are partly (but not wholly) mediated by the placebo effect (McManus, 2017; Zadro and Stapleton, 2022) which is mediated by effects of gentle touch and human presence, both of which are totally absent in AI. Anybody who has been around horses has learnt about the importance of non-verbal communication, the subtle body movements, changing breath sounds, relaxation of facial muscles, that indicate feelings of trust, of letting down the guard. That is the best way to promote healing and to allow Reiki to do its work. Artificial intelligence cannot do that. It cannot give a Reiki session.

Conclusion

To conclude, I think that AI provides exciting possibilities for learning how Reiki affects clients and practitioners physiologically and using that information both to increase our understanding of Reiki's possibilities and to enhance our clients' healing experiences. An additional potential benefit, if used with the client's

consent, is the ability to automatically optimise the environment for their own unique physiology and treatment intention. Clear and transparent consent processes will be necessary to ensure that clients understand how their data will be used and guidelines should be crafted which address issues such as data privacy and the potential impact on individuals and other stakeholders. Rather than taking the role of the healer, AI should be considered as a helpful tool that enhances and improves human-led therapies.

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