

# Intention-Specific Reiki vs. Simple Relaxation

## Quantifying the Effects on the Physical and Nervous System Biofields

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### Abstract

**Objectives:** The main purpose of this study was to measure the effect of a single session of Reiki on physical and nervous system health as compared to a relaxation control session in a small cohort of 20 individuals.

**Design:** The study design was a randomized, two-round, crossover, pilot study to evaluate the bioenergetic effect of Reiki performed with specific intent between Reiki practitioner and subject as compared to a relaxation session of same time duration.

**Settings:** The study took place at a private facility in Glendale, Arizona.

**Subjects:** Subjects in the study ranged in age from 16 to 79 years, with a mean age of 50.5 years. 85% were female. Of the 20 total subjects, 14 were familiar with Reiki, and six were naïve to Reiki.

**Interventions:** Two trained and certified Reiki Master Level practitioners conducted the Reiki sessions in person, with each Reiki session lasting 25 minutes. The Reiki masters held a specific intention regarding the heart/heart chakra region for highest expression/elevation during the Reiki sessions. The relaxation sessions were simple, quiet time sessions of same duration as the Reiki sessions. No direction regarding focus or intent was provided for the relaxation sessions.

**Outcome Measures:** Subjects were asked to complete a 10-point Likert Scale questionnaire before and after both relaxation and Reiki sessions. After the Likert Scale questionnaire each subject was measured with the Health-E-Circuit system (E-Circ). The system measures the bioelectric energetic exchange within the body pertaining to mitochondrial respiration, a relative measure for biophoton exchange. Two measures are made, one pertaining to the physical function response and the other to the autonomic nervous system response across the five major body systems: Cardiovascular, Gastrointestinal, Hepatic, Renal and Respiratory. While the E-Circ scan has the capability of producing measurements across 49 different organs/structures in the body, it was decided that a focus would be made on the overall body system outcomes.

**Results:** Each of the 20 subjects completed both a Reiki and relaxation session of same duration. Statistically significant improvements were observed for all Reiki physical outcome measures: Cardio,  $p=3.45e-5$ ; GI,  $p=4.90e-4$ ; Hep,  $p=0.028$ ; Ren,  $p=2.60e-4$ ; Resp,  $p=1.84e-5$ . The Reiki autonomic nervous system measurements also had significant outcomes: Cardio,  $p=1.34e-5$  and Resp,  $p=1.61e-5$ , while the remaining systems did not achieve significance. The relaxation sessions physical measurements also produced significant outcomes for all systems except Hepatic,  $p=0.079$  with Cardio,  $p=0.003$ ; GI,  $p=0.010$ ; Ren,  $p=0.034$ ; Resp,  $p=0.022$ . Relaxation autonomic nervous system measurements had significant results for Cardio,  $p=0.004$ ; Ren,  $p=0.023$ ; and Resp,  $p=0.004$  while Hep,  $p=0.223$ , and GI,  $p=0.06$  were not significant.

**Conclusions:** The results from this double cross-over study suggest that a single session of Reiki improves multiple variables related to physical and autonomic nervous system health, and in direct correlation to the intentions held by the Reiki practitioner.

Keywords: Reiki, intention, physical, autonomic nervous system, health, affect, pain, wellbeing

## **Introduction**

Subtle energy therapies such as Reiki have been shown to produce significant health and wellness outcomes (Natalie L. Dyer, 2019). The dynamic human-to-human interaction between a Reiki practitioner and a receiving subject provides a rich platform for exploration. The human-to-human interaction is a multilevel, biofield-to-biofield exchange generating a cascade of both physiological, as well as emotional, exchanges between the two individuals. The human biofield is the complex, extremely weak electromagnetic field of the organism hypothesized to involve electromagnetic bioinformation for regulating homeodynamics. (Rubik, 2002) The biofield offers a unifying theory to describe the interaction of human-to-human energy medicine therapies, as well as other subtle field therapies such as homeopathy, acupuncture and kinesiology. There exists a variety of methods to measure the electromagnetic fields that contribute to the human biofield. Historically there are the electroencephalogram (EEG) and electrocardiogram (ECG), as well as several other bioimpedance devices that have been used to measure biofield changes. Objective, reproducible and quantifiable measures of the biofield have long been sought after.

This study utilizes the Health-E-Circuit technology based on coronal discharge as its method of biofield measurement along with its assessment of the dynamic changes across the physiological and nervous system components comprising the human biofield. This technology measures the biofield focusing on the five major organ systems of the body from both a physical and autonomic nervous system standpoint. The Health-E-Circuit scan allows for reliable, reproducible measurements to be made with ease. This technology meets the challenge of measuring the power of intention in the complex energy exchange between Reiki practitioner and recipient.

The study goal was to effectively visualize and measure the changes produced by a specifically held, intention-based Reiki session on the human biofield, thus witnessing the power of the heart and mind in a state of coherence. In the experiment described below, a cohort of individuals differing in age, gender and Reiki awareness, along with experienced healthcare practitioners, came together to demonstrate that intention does play a role in healing transmission. The primary reason intention played such an important role here is that typical energetic healing sessions hold an underlying intention for the highest good for the individual throughout the healing therapy delivery. Highest good will always be different since no two individual's needs are identical. While this is an important attribute of our individuality, it can confound outcomes and create a difficulty in measuring outcomes. In an effort to overcome this issue, our experiment incorporated an intention held during the healing session, which was specific enough to allow for a measurable outcome that was both definite and significant. The effects of intention, and human-to-human healing resonance, physiological as well as nervous system responses, are all components of this exercise.

## **Background**

Reiki is a Japanese word that means spiritually guided life force energy. (Rand, 2020) Energy fields and information surround living systems and these fields can be influenced by a myriad of factors. Most subtle energy therapies involve an energetic exchange between practitioner and client. Energetic therapies that involve human-to-human interaction can result in the practitioner feeling drained or tired afterwards. The principle behind Reiki is that the practitioner simply allows the Reiki energy to flow passively through their hands and into the client. Reiki can enhance and act as a restorative for the autonomic nervous system, in particular the parasympathetic nervous system. (Natalie L. Dyer, 2019) The autonomic nervous system is

composed of the parasympathetic and sympathetic systems, which act to counterbalance one another. Currently most individuals exist in a state of sympathetic overdrive, resulting in imbalance and potential immune system suppression which affects the body's innate ability to heal. Hundreds of hospitals across the United States currently offer Reiki to their patients. Historically, due to the complexity involved to accurately measure and quantify subtle energies, there has been little research to substantiate the effectiveness of Reiki and other subtle energetic therapies. As noted in a study done in 2018, "Systematic reviews and meta-analyses of Reiki reveal that it has statistically significant improvements in many physical and psychological symptoms common to a wide range of diseases such as mood problems, anxiety, depression, fatigue, pain, and nausea." "From 1989 to 2018, a total of 74 peer-reviewed research articles have been published on Reiki. Of the higher quality studies, those comparing Reiki to at least sham-Reiki or standard-of-care largely support the hypothesis that Reiki may reduce pain, anxiety, depression, and burnout and may increase relaxation and wellbeing." (Natalie L. Dyer, 2019) The study described herein is a pragmatic trial assessing the effectiveness of individuals receiving Reiki in a non-clinical setting.

Since Reiki is based on the idea that an unseen life force energy flows through us and causes us to be alive, its inter-human application can be used to rebalance, stabilize and/or boost a deficient energy status. From a quantum physical standpoint, it is thought that there is a resonance created between the two biofields that allows for beneficial changes to occur.

A treatment feels like a wonderful glowing radiance that flows through and around an individual. Reiki treats the whole person including body, emotions, mind, and spirit creating many beneficial effects that include relaxation, feelings of peace, security, and wellbeing. Many have reported miraculous results. (Rand 2020).

Several years ago, an attempt to measure the effects of Reiki as compared to a sham-Reiki session was made by two other authors. The basics for that experiment were 20 participants blinded to the treatment's authenticity that they were to receive. The first day ten (10) participants were randomly selected to receive an authentic Reiki session by an experienced Reiki practitioner, while the remaining ten participants experienced a placebo sham-Reiki session by a lay person. The lay person did not know anything about Reiki and was told to focus their intention on peanut butter and jelly sandwiches as they held their hands over the body of the participant. In contrast, the intention held by the Reiki practitioner was for the highest good for the participant. The second day of the experiment, the groups of ten were switched and the same process was followed. Before and after each session, the participants were measured by the E-Circ system.

Upon reviewing the experiment results, it was confounding to find no significant difference between the outcomes. Over the ensuing years as understanding of the power of the heart and intention developed, it was realized that the generic intention, while well meaning, was not conducive to producing a shift as evidenced in a measurable outcome.

In 2017 another Reiki study was done, this time an intentionally based Reiki session was compared to a relaxation session of same time duration. The intent held by the Reiki practitioners was based on optimizing the energy of the Heart/Heart Chakra region. During this study participants knew they were receiving Reiki, however, they were unaware of the specific intention being held by the practitioner. Involved were 20 study participants, two experienced Reiki master level practitioners, and two E-Circ systems.

A Likert questionnaire was used as a measurement tool. The Likert scale questionnaire was applied before and after both the Reiki session and relaxation sessions. The questions were generally directed around the perception of wellness, easy to dispatch, and produced interesting results.

The other measurement tool was the E-Circ system. The E-Circ system is a non-invasive medical device that received FDA clearance as an electrophysiological measurement tool in 2016\*\*. The E-Circ scan measures both the autonomic nervous system and the physical system responses, as they relate to the electrophysiological signals associated with human body systems.

Every cell in the body emits more than 100,000 light impulses or photons per second. These light emissions, otherwise known as biophotons, have been found to be the steering mechanism behind all biochemical reactions. Unlike other bio-impedance devices that measure electrophysiology, the E-Circ system measures electromagnetic energy in the form of a coronal discharge reflective of the electromagnetic energies available via mitochondrial respiration and other physiological mechanisms. While not a direct measure of biophotons as seen via black box spectrometers, it presents a relative measure of the biophotonic activity within and surrounding the body. It has been demonstrated that biophoton emissions are strongest in the hands. It has also been demonstrated that if a disease is present, biophotonic imbalances are emitted between left and right hands, suggesting diagnostic potential of biophoton measures (Nancy R. Rizzo, 2016).

The E-Circ system has been researched for more than 15 years and has demonstrated significant abilities to assess organ and structure disturbances throughout the body as related to disease and mitochondrial respiration changes. By tapping into the holographic electromagnetic communication of the body via the fingers, the E-Circ system is able to assess both subtle energetic shifts, and autonomic nervous system responses, as well as functional physiologic changes.

The E-Circ system consists of a camera that lies under a glass electrode. When a finger is placed on the glass electrode of the scanner, a high frequency voltage impulse is applied under the glass to initiate an energetic charge to the mitochondria and local electrolytic of the finger tissue. The high voltage impulse generates a localized electromagnetic field around the finger thus exciting and amplifying the electromagnetic field within the skin, tissues, and nerves in the fingertip. The combination of the electromagnetic energy of the finger and that of the scanner electrode leads to an excitation of the local air molecules, forming room temperature plasma-energized air molecules. The energy of the plasma is released via the ionization of the local air molecules, thus emitting photons within the ultraviolet and visible light spectrum. The ionization event is captured via the camera and the resultant image is relayed into a computer system where the light image is analyzed via the proprietary software of the E-Circ system. Proprietary algorithms formulated upon a large database of information correlated with specific diseases and states of health create a prioritizing scoring method to recognize electrophysiological activity associated with specific organ systems and disease states. At the completion of the finger scans, several outcomes are provided via a systems dashboard. The dashboard data is a summary score for each of the five major systems of the body – cardiovascular, respiratory, gastrointestinal, hepatic, and renal. The E-Circ system was utilized in this study to evaluate, quantify and detect the subtle energy movement generated through the bodies of the study participants as a result of the Reiki sessions and compare the results to those generated by the relaxation sessions.

The E-Circ system has demonstrated a strong ability to identify both autonomic nervous system and physiological status as well as changes arising from therapeutic intervention. Whether or not

the therapeutic intervention was subtle does not pose a problem for the E-Circ system, therefore making its use as an assessment tool for this subtle energy exercise is quite effective.

## **Study Design**

The study design was a randomized, two-round, crossover, pilot study to evaluate the bioenergetic effect of Reiki performed with specific intent between Reiki practitioner and subject as compared to a relaxation session of same time duration. Subjects in the study ranged in age from 16 to 79 years, with a mean age of 50.5 years. 85% were female. Of the 20 total subjects, fourteen were familiar to Reiki and six were naïve to Reiki.

Participants selected were over 16 years old, not pregnant, had no chronic disease (e.g., diabetes, hypertension, cancer), and no pacemaker or other electrical equipment implanted in the body. All were clinically healthy and personally felt able to participate in treatments involving Reiki and energy analysis measurements.

Participants were informed that they were required to visit the study facility on two consecutive days for approximately one hour each day. They were aware that they would be randomly assigned to receive either a Reiki session (test treatment) or relaxation session (control session without Reiki energy).

On day one, the participants completed a nine-question, 10-point Likert scale focused on their perceptions and self-awareness of emotional state and current level of wellbeing. They then met with Dr. Nancy Rizzo (or trained assistant) for their initial E-Circ scan measurements. No invasive procedures were performed during any portion of this study. After the E-Circ scan was completed, the subject was directed to the session to which they were randomly assigned.

The Reiki and relaxation sessions were both 25 minutes long. Once each session finished, the study coordinator escorted the participant back to the testing area, where they completed the outgoing Likert scale and had their follow-up E-Circ scan.

Two nearly identical private treatment rooms were used in this study. They were roughly ten feet by twelve feet in size, and contained a padded massage table on which the subject would lie, a chair at the head of the massage table for the Reiki practitioner to use during the intervention, and a small desk on the side of the room opposite of the massage table which was unused. There was natural lighting from shuttered windows and a small lamp with a 60-watt bulb. A blanket was available at foot of the massage table, as well as an eye pillow.

The Reiki session was performed by one of two female RN Reiki practitioners. One was a Reiki master teacher who has been practicing for 20 years, and the other a Level 2 Reiki practitioner who has been trained in Level 1 and 2 a year prior to the study by the aforementioned Reiki master. The Reiki practitioners agreed upon a consistent treatment protocol and placed their hands in suggested positions over the subject's head, throat and shoulders, torso, and feet.

Per Reiki guidelines as stipulated in the Reiki manual (available at [www.Reiki.org](http://www.Reiki.org)), energy flows to exactly where the recipient most needs it. For this study, we selected a unique intention: focus [with love, compassion, appreciation] on the participant's heart chakra with the intention of balancing the energy and healing any issues that might be associated with that region of the body. The entire treatment took 25 minutes. Throughout the intervention phase, participants lay supine on a padded massage table, and quiet was maintained in a private room with minimal natural

lighting. During this private session, participants remained fully-clothed with shoes and tight belts removed to allow for optimal energy flow.

The relaxation session was conducted in a semi-private room with two padded leather recliners. During relaxation control, participants were instructed to sit or recline quietly. Two participants were in the room simultaneously and their start and end times varied so there was detectable movement. Natural light and ambient noise were kept to a minimum. Noise reduction headphones were available, as well as an eye pillow.

On the second day of the study, the process was repeated. Participants were aware that if they had the Reiki session on the first day, they would have a relaxation session the second day, and vice versa. The subjects were randomized not only to which session they would receive first but also to which Reiki practitioner they were assigned.

## **Findings/Outcomes**

The Likert scale questionnaire consisted of 9 questions:

1. Have you ever had Reiki before?
2. What is your level of happiness?
3. What is your level of energy?
4. What is your level of stress?
5. What is your relaxation level on a daily basis?
6. What is your pain level?
7. What is your level of anxiety?
8. What is your level of awareness of what your body is communicating to you?
9. How scattered do you feel your energy is?

The following statistics describe the outcomes of the Likert questionnaires before and after each session. The simple student t-test was used as the statistical comparison. One tailed t-test p values are reported.

1. Of the 20 participants, six (6) had never experienced a Reiki session and were not knowledgeable to what it was.
2. The Reiki session revealed a statistical significance comparing before and after the session for the level of happiness. Comparing the before and after for the Reiki session revealed a significant difference (p value 0.002) for the one-tailed t test. The relaxation session did not reveal a significant difference before and after.
3. The level of energy before and after either session did not result in any significant difference.
4. The level of stress before and after both Reiki and relaxation sessions demonstrated significant results with the Reiki sessions being approximately 3000 times more significant than the relaxation: Reiki,  $p = 1.09e-06$ ; relaxation,  $p = 0.003$ .
5. The level of relaxation on a daily basis did not reveal significant difference.
6. The pain level before and after the two sessions revealed a significant result for both. However, the significance for the Reiki was five (5) times that of the relaxation session: Reiki,  $p = 0.002$ ; relaxation,  $p = 0.012$ .

7. The level of anxiety before and after Reiki had significant results, with the Reiki sessions being 17 times more significant and therefore more effective at reducing anxiety than the relaxation session: Reiki,  $p = 0.001$ ; relaxation,  $p = 0.021$ .
8. The level of body communication awareness did not produce any significant difference in outcomes via the Likert questionnaire.
9. The participants felt that they had much less scattered energies after the Reiki session as compared to the relaxation session. The Reiki session being 2.4 times more significant in reducing scattered energies as compared to the relaxation session: Reiki,  $p$  values = 0.003; relaxation,  $p = 0.008$ .

### Likert Scale Statistical Results: Reiki and Relaxation p values

Question	Reiki	Relaxation
1. Prior Reiki experience	14 of 20	N/A
2. Happiness level	0.002	0.5
3. Energy level	0.342	0.317
4. Stress level	1.09 E-06	0.003
5. Relaxation level	0.250	0.070
6. Pain level	0.002	0.012
7. Anxiety level	0.001	0.021
8. Body awareness	0.130	0.357
9. Less scattered energy	0.003	0.008

In the chart above it is apparent that the most significant result by a large margin was for the Reiki session and its reduction on stress level. Reiki sessions were significant for increased happiness level, reduced stress level, and decreased pain and anxiety level as well as producing an overall feeling of being less energetically scattered. The relaxation session produced significant results for stress level, pain level, anxiety level, and for being less energetically scattered. In all cases where both Reiki and relaxation resulted in significant outcomes, those for the Reiki sessions far exceeded that of relaxation by several orders of magnitude.

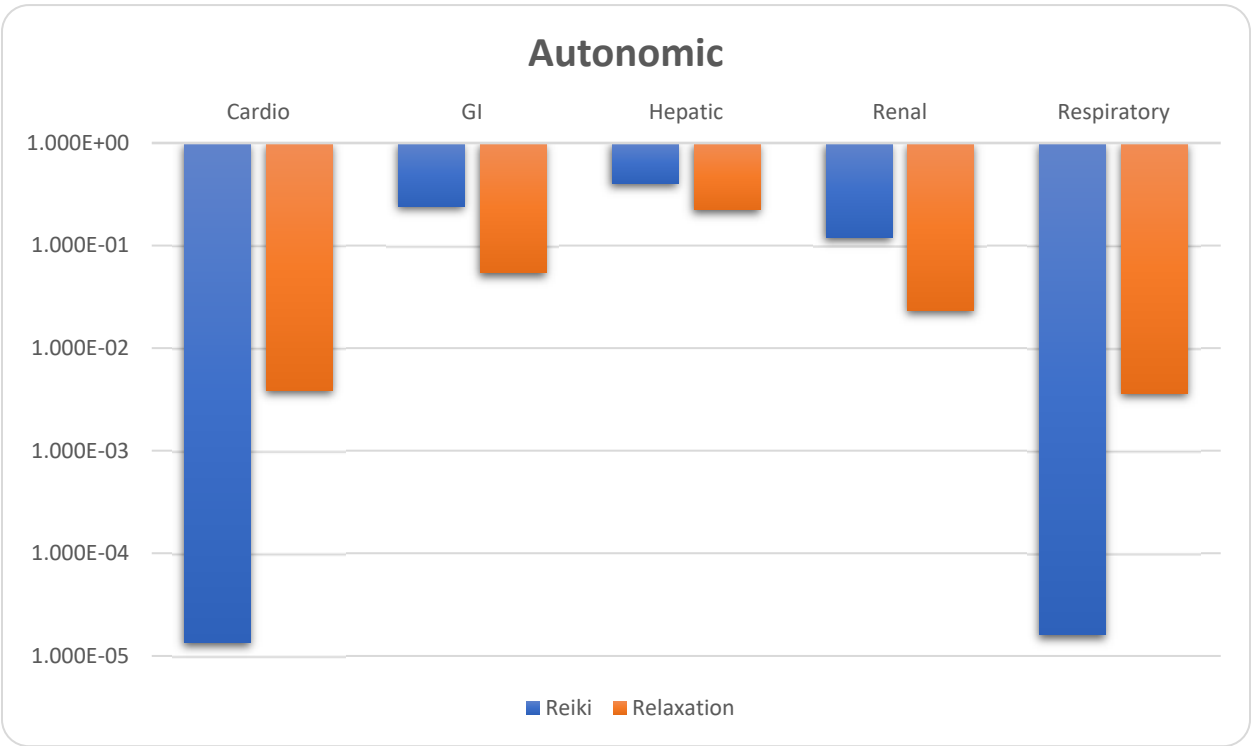
### Health-E-Circuit Data Findings

The Health-E-Circuit (E-Circ) scan data set includes a scored response based on Bayesian analytics for each major body system. These scores were compared via the one-tailed t-test for the Reiki and relaxation settings. As expected within the experimental design and understanding of energy movement for the body, when there was a significant response, it always resulted in an overall increase in energy for that organ system for either the Reiki or the relaxation sessions. In other words, there was a positive energetic response for both the Reiki and the relaxation sessions. Most notable was the physical Reiki responses overall producing a highly significant energetic enhancement for the whole body, with the respiratory and cardiovascular systems being the highest in alignment with the intention setting.

### Health-E-Circuit Results per Organ System Significance Outcomes

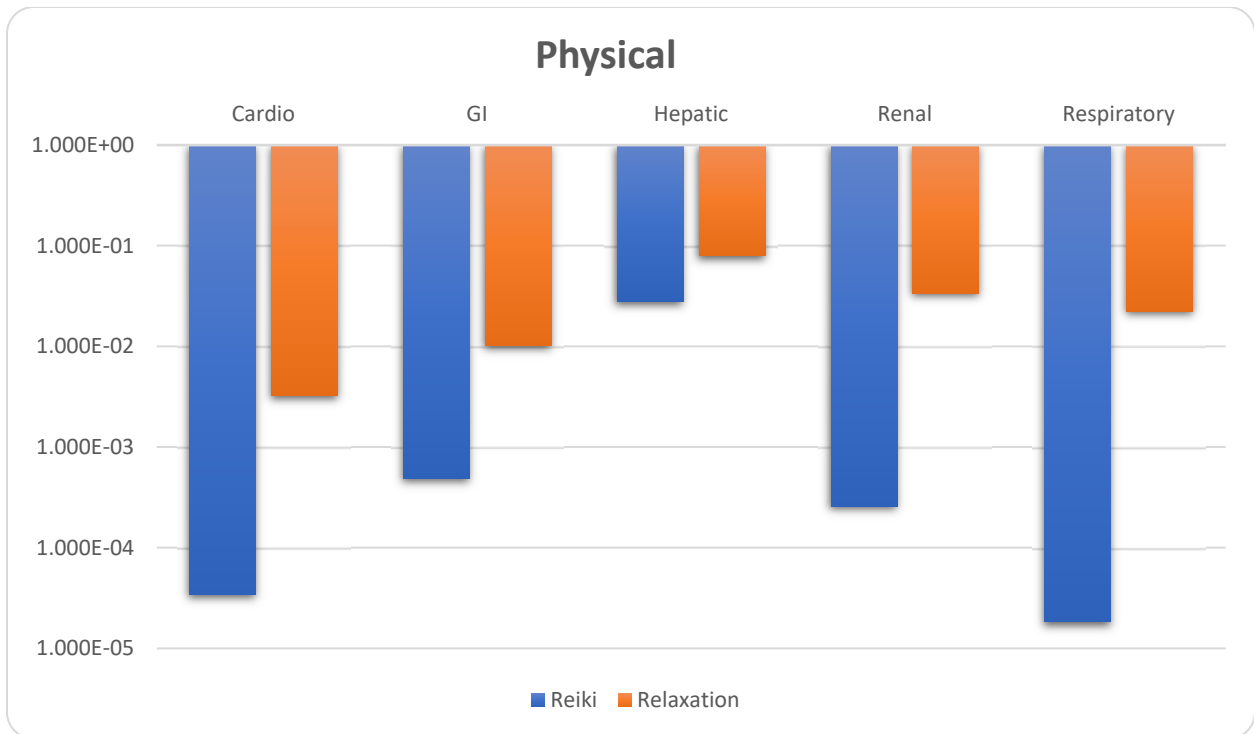
Physical			Autonomic		
Organ System	Reiki	Relaxation	Organ System	Reiki	Relaxation
<b>Cardio</b>	3.46e-05	0.003	<b>Cardio</b>	1.34e-05	0.004
<b>GI</b>	4.90e-04	0.010	<b>GI</b>	0.243	0.055
<b>Hepatic</b>	0.028	0.079	<b>Hepatic</b>	0.404	0.223
<b>Renal</b>	2.60e-04	0.034	<b>Renal</b>	0.120	0.023
<b>Respiratory</b>	1.84e-05	0.022	<b>Respiratory</b>	1.61e-05	0.004

One tailed t-test results.



Due to the disparity in p value significance between Reiki and relaxation data, the log of the p values was used. The smaller the number the higher the significance.





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In the charts above it is apparent for the physical measures across all organ systems, the Reiki sessions produced a significant difference between the before and after the sessions. The physical measures for the relaxation session were also significant, except for the hepatic system. When comparing the significance between the two sessions, the Reiki session revealed much higher significance values ranging from three (3) times more to over 1000 times more significant than that found for the relaxation session. Specifically, the areas pertaining to the heart chakra region – heart and lungs – were the two of the five organ systems providing the highest significance for the Reiki session as intended, while the relaxation session top two were cardiovascular and gastrointestinal.

Interestingly, for the autonomic measures only the cardiovascular and the respiratory were significant for the Reiki session. The relaxation session produced significant outcomes for the cardiovascular, respiratory, and renal systems in that order. Again, the significance achieved for the Reiki session was immensely more significant than that found for the relaxation session for the cardiovascular and respiratory systems, and more than 200 times more significant than relaxation for the autonomic nervous system response. Again, this is in alignment with the intention held by the Reiki practitioners.

## Discussion

It is observed and acknowledged that the Likert questionnaires could produce a biased result for the Reiki sessions simply because they were different in content than the relaxation sessions. Considering simply that the participants were laying down, eyes closed, and in a quiet environment for 25 minutes, as opposed to sitting in a recliner with some potential disturbances by a second individual which could have influenced the response. Could the simple knowledge

of having a Reiki session, whether the participant was Reiki knowledgeable or not, create a bias in the way the participants answered the questions? Intentioned space is known to play a part in outcomes, so could that have been a factor too? These are questions for further consideration. Taken at face value, the Reiki sessions produced an overall more favorable outcome than did the relaxation sessions.

The observations and conclusions reached from the E-Circ scan data provide some interesting concepts for consideration. As with the Likert scale analysis, the simple student t-test was used to compare the before and after responses for the E-Circ scan data.

First, it must be stated that there is no way to bias the outcomes of the E-Circ scan measurements. Images taken by the E-Circ system cannot be altered or manufactured in any way. Second, the overall significance of the Reiki sessions was outstanding on its own merit let alone compared to the relaxation sessions. Further, it was tremendously rewarding to find that the most significant changes were found for the respiratory and cardiovascular body systems in alignment with the intentions held for the Reiki sessions. Though both the Reiki and relaxation sessions produced significant physical measure outcomes, the Reiki sessions produced significant difference orders of magnitude (on average), greater than those found for the relaxation sessions. The highest significance was found for the intended focus on heart/heart chakra regions.

For the autonomic nervous system responses, both the Reiki and the relaxation sessions produced significant changes. The Reiki session produced significant outcomes for the cardiovascular and respiratory systems, and relaxation sessions produced significant outcomes for the respiratory, cardiovascular and renal systems. The comparison in significance between the Reiki and relaxation sessions again revealed that Reiki was in excess of 200 times more significant than relaxation for the cardiovascular and respiratory systems. Encouraging to note, it was the areas of the body focused on via the intention held by the practitioners that were most significant.

When looking at the areas of response for the Reiki physical measures, the respiratory and cardiovascular systems were ten (10) times more significant than the gastrointestinal and renal systems, and 1000 times more significant than the hepatic system. The Reiki session produced an overall physiological enhancement in energy. Was this by chance, or due to the intention? The authors believe that this was entirely due to the intention held during the session.

Did the resonance created between biofields of the practitioner and recipient create the alignment of response of the heart and respiratory systems according to the intentions held? Discussions among the authors regarding the responses of the autonomic nervous system present the following considerations. The participant was relaxing therefore the heart, respiratory and renal systems would necessarily benefit. The gastrointestinal system and liver have many more variables to consider which add complexity to their response via either Reiki or relaxation, (e.g., digestion, toxin load). For the physical and autonomic measures, the gastrointestinal and hepatic were the lowest responders, with the hepatic being the lowest in all cases.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion it is felt the experiment was successful in demonstrating that Reiki is not only effective in enhancing the overall wellbeing of the individual receiving treatment but can also carry an intention that will be transmitted to the recipient. It was also shown that Reiki is a much more powerful tool in creating a more coherent, balanced biofield both in the physical and the autonomic nervous systems, than simple relaxation alone. The power of intention was shown to have a very significant effect in the transmission of Reiki energy. It was encouraging that the

Reiki sessions produced significant results for the whole body, with the highest results found for the targeted organ systems via intention.

There is a great deal of interest in intention as a research variable. Objective, reproducible results can be difficult to obtain for studies involving intention and subtle energy therapies. The results found in the research presented in this study provide incentive for further research along similar and expanded directions of interest. Overall outcome, independent of intention held, demonstrates that Reiki is a highly effective therapy to increase one's overall state of wellbeing. It is hoped that this research provides another major step forward towards the mainstream adoption of subtle energy therapies.

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