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### Using Healing Touch to Help Junior Nursing Students with Their Anxiety

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**Purpose:** The purpose of this study was to investigate if a Healing Touch session could lower junior nursing students anxiety.

Students frequently discuss their anxieties with their professors. They worry about being successful in the academic environment. Test anxiety is a major concern for many students, and more so for students who are continually evaluated for progression in a program, such as nursing. Students are aware of their anxiety, and the consequences of that anxiety. They look for strategies to help them deal with their anxiety so that they may gain control over situations.

Additionally, junior nursing students often have difficulty making the transition from theory laden courses to courses where they are required to apply previously learned information, such as the clinical nursing courses. They report feeling anxious applying this information when they are tested and/or are when they are in the clinical experience. The anxiety experienced by the junior nursing students may be preventing them from being successful in objective testing, which may prevent them from progressing in the nursing program.

Healing Touch is a non-invasive bio-field relaxation therapy that is an energy based approach to healing and health. It uses touch to influence the human engery system, specifically the energy that surrounds the body, and the energy flow from the fields to the physical body. Healing Touch is a biofield (magnetic field around the body) therapy that is an energy-based approach to health and healing. The goal of Healing Touch (HT) is to restore balance in clients' energy field, therefore allowing them to self-heal. HT uses noninvasive techniques using the hand and gentle touch to clear, energize, and balance the human and environmental energy fields affecting physical, emotional, mental and spiritual health to facilitate healing. Several studies have been done to identify if HT helps facilitate healing and decrease

anxiety in various illnesses. Although there is research on HT, there is no research on the effects of HT on anxiety levels in nursing students. The purpose of this study is to determine if a Healing Touch session will lower junior nursing students' anxiety.

**Methods:** A convenient sample of 88 junior nursing students consented to participate in this quasi-experimental research study. Because of student & Healing touch practitioner availability, 37 junior nursing students received the Healing Touch session. Prior to the session, the students responded to Spielberger's State Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI). The State Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) is a valid and reliable measurement of anxiety used in numerous research studies. The Healing Touch session was performed by a certified Healing Touch practitioner, who happened to be a registered nurse. The Healing Touch session lasted approximately 50 minutes. After the session, the students were given a second copy of the STAI. They were asked to fill it out between 3 and 7 days after the Healing Touch session, and to return it to the primary investigator. Thirty three of 37 students returned the second STAI to the primary investigator.

**Results:** Descriptive statistics on the total scores reviewed the students' pre state anxiety scores ranged from 33-57 and their post state anxiety scores ranged from 36-79. When a paired t-test was computed on the state anxiety scores, a statistically significant increase (mean = 2.79,  $p = .001$ ) was found between the pre & posttest scores. The students' pre trait anxiety scores ranged from 26-63 and their post trait anxiety scores ranged from 26-55. When a paired t-test was computed on the trait anxiety scores, a statistically significant decrease (mean = -3.41,  $p = .001$ ) was found between the pre & posttest trait anxiety scores.

**Conclusions:** The statistically significant increase in state anxiety scores may be attributed to a variety of issues including: clinical experiences, testing in courses perceived as difficult, or circumstances not identified such as personal challenges. The statistically significant reduction in the trait anxiety scores may be attributed to the effects of the Healing Touch session. Limitations include a convenient sample of junior nursing students from one university was studied. Due to student & Healing Touch practitioner availability, only 37 students received the Healing Touch session and only 33 students returned the completed second STAI form to the primary investigator. Although statistically significant findings occurred, more research in this area is warranted.

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