

Key Discoveries in Energy Healing

Shamini Jain

Y*ou never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete.*
– Buckminster Fuller

Regeneration and healing: How far can we go?

As the global human family finds us squarely in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis, we have noticed how regenerative our Earth really is. Greenhouse gas emissions are plummeting, and air quality has drastically improved, bringing blue skies to places like Los Angeles. Waterways like the Ganga (Ganges River), generally fraught with industrial pollution, are now clearing, with the water becoming drinkable. This “Great Pause” as some have called it, is a time where we can reflect on how we wish to evolve the systems we humans have created for a healthy, thriving life in Right Relationship with the Earth and with each other. There has never been a better time for us to envision new possibilities for a regenerative, peaceful world — and begin to bring that world into fruition.

Today’s turbulent times are causing all of us to examine what is working and not working in our systems — whether the ecological system, the socioeconomic system, the healthcare system, the scientific system or even the family system.

The key to our next steps in improving our human

systems is knowing what is possible. How can we be empowered in healing ourselves, and how can we use our power to support others? What role does consciousness have, and how far does it reach, in fostering healing?¹

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The need for healing solutions

These are just some of the questions that many research scientists, healing practitioners and university educators are asking right now, and for good reason. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic began, we were already suffering from a massive global health crisis. According to the World Health Organization, non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes and respiratory disease kill 41 million people every year.² In the U.S., drug overdoses are the leading killer of Americans under 50.³ An estimated 300 million people globally are affected by depression, and that does not account for the other 100+ million that suffer from other mental disorders



including anxiety, PTSD and more.⁴ Suicide rates have jumped 35% in the past two decades, reflecting a jarring trend in human despair and hopelessness.⁵ This is costing us in lives as well as dollars: monetary costs for the current opioid crises alone are estimated at \$100 TRILLION since 2001, with a projected cost of an additional \$500 billion by 2020.⁶

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This health crisis points to the urgent need for us to examine personally and scientifically, the ways we can empower ourselves to heal our human suffering, instead of feeling powerless and then numbing our pain. As we emerge from these models of disconnection and isolation that pervade our society and explore how to best support and expand our medical models of care, we begin to notice the quiet emergence of new scientific discoveries – ones that suggest that as a human species, we have a profound capacity to heal ourselves and each other. These studies suggest that human bodies and minds are beyond the simplistic “lock and key” biochemical and receptor interactions that are currently thought to drive behavior. We are not complex machines. We are bioenergetic organisms that are completely intertwined with our environments.

To this end, groups of scientists, healthcare practitioners, educators and innovators have been exploring these questions in-depth in an area we call *Biofield Science and Healing*. Biofield science researchers study fields of energy and information as they relate to our health. Some fields we study are electromagnetic in nature and some are more difficult to measure directly with current instrumentation, yet affect our healing in positive ways.

Explaining Biofield Science

I remind colleagues who are unfamiliar with the area, that biofield science is not necessarily mysterious. The study of biofields includes examining electromagnetic emanations from our bodies that tell us about our state of health. Tried and true examples of biofields in medicine today are electrocardiograms (EKGs)

and electroencephalograms (EEGs): electromagnetic readouts of the heart and brain that reveal clinically important information about our state of health. Biofield science also includes examining what happens to our bodies when we apply certain types of energy to our bodies. For example, researchers are exploring how biofield devices that use light, sound and low-level electromagnetic stimulation on the body, might help clinical issues such as pain, wound healing, depression and most recently, Alzheimer’s disease.^{7,8} Although our understanding of all the physiological pathways by which bioelectromagnetic devices affect our healing is far from complete, biofield devices’ clinical effects help us to understand that we are bioelectromagnetic beings that are sensitive to energetic fields, as well as to chemical drugs. In several cases the energetic fields themselves, even without drugs, can stimulate our healing.

By integrating holistic approaches that care for spiritual, mental-emotional and energetic needs alongside physical ones, we stand to finally create a system of whole-person medicine.

As healers know, biofield science also includes non-physical, “subtle energy” fields that have been described in ancient philosophies of medicine as key to the healing process. These include Ayurvedic, Chinese, Tibetan, African, Native American and other indigenous medicine descriptions of subtle, non-physical vital energy, such as *prana*, *chi*, *rlung* and *ki*, which is viewed as a core component of health and healing. Naturopathic medicine calls this the *vis medicatrix naturae*. Current “mind-body” and spiritual approaches such as yoga, meditation, qigong,



acupuncture and others are based on healing through understanding and shifting subtle energy dynamics to promote mental, physical, emotional and spiritual healing. These descriptions of using subtle energy to foster regenerative healing are thousands of years old.⁹ Healing practitioners, such as those who practice Healing Touch, Reiki, Laying-on-of-Hands, external Qi Gong and many more, report that they sense and work with subtle energy to foster healing in another. Sometimes, what scientists are calling “biofield healing” is called “energy healing” or “subtle energy healing” by others in the community. But in truth, all of these holistic forms of healing, whether they be acupuncture, healing touch or even naturopathy or qigong, describe the central role of working with the biofield, for fostering health.

What do we say to people who think energy healing is “woo” or “placebo”?

One of the things we have noticed about the field is just how polarized the thinking is around it. Enthusiasts or “hardcore believers” of energy healing might claim that energy can heal just about anything. Skeptics or “hardcore nonbelievers” will discount published scientific evidence saying that the whole idea of energy healing is preposterous. Beyond all the polarized thinking, what does the actual evidence say about healing?

Our group at the nonprofit **Consciousness and Healing Initiative** has conducted a year-long deep-dive to help get a sense on the state of evidence for biofield healing practices.¹⁰ In order to understand this type of healing more, we have also interviewed and shared what healing practitioners and patients are saying about how healing works. We have just published our findings in a free comprehensive report for the public, complete with infographics, databases and other resources to dig into: <https://www.chi.is/systems-mapping-partners/>

Here are some things we have learned:

- *There are more published studies than we thought.* We found over 6,000 publications in biofield science and made them publicly available in a referencing library so anyone can

search them.¹¹

- *Studies show promise for pain and other ailments, but not all studies are positive.* A systematic review that compiled data from over 60 clinical studies of biofield therapies found strong evidence suggesting that these therapies are beneficial for treating pain in many different types of patients.¹² Other independent systematic reviews have reported similar effects of biofield therapies on reducing pain beyond placebo.¹³ There is also evidence to suggest that they are helpful for behavioral symptoms of dementia, as well as anxiety in hospitalized patients. Another systematic review of 18 randomized controlled trials suggested that effects of healing are not dependent on touch.¹⁴ However, these more comprehensive reviews are around 10 years old, which means new studies are not included in the analysis of evidence. And more recent systematic reviews that just looked at one type of healing (for example, three studies of Reiki for depression and anxiety) reported no positive effects.¹⁵
- *Several human and animal studies suggest human biofield healing affects us down to the cellular level — but we have yet to fully understand the “mechanisms.”* A randomized controlled trial RCT from researchers at the University of Iowa found that healing touch, compared to relaxation and treatment as usual, reduced depression and maintained natural killer cell activity in cervical cancer patients undergoing chemoradiation.¹⁶ Another randomized, placebo-controlled trial at UC San Diego investigated hands-on-healing for breast cancer survivors and found improvements in cortisol rhythms for cancer survivors getting actual healing, but not those getting mock healing or getting nothing at all.¹⁷ More recent placebo-controlled studies with animals and cells at the University of Arizona, M.D. Anderson Cancer Center and University of Connecticut have reported effects of human biofield healing on tumor metastasis and immune responses, tumor growth and related cytokines, and microvascular leakage in response to stress.^{18, 19, 20} are just a handful of



studies — there is much more to explore to better understand how healing might “get under the skin”.

These studies, and many more, are detailed in our report: www.chi.is/systems-mapping-resources/.

Healing and systems change: key discoveries

We undertook this project because we are passionate about fostering a system of healthcare that puts evidence-based subtle energy and biofield healing approaches alongside conventional care in medicine. By integrating holistic approaches that care for spiritual, mental-emotional and energetic needs alongside physical ones, we stand to finally create a system of whole-person medicine. To aid us in a big-picture view, our group took a systems-change approach — “an intentional process designed to alter the status quo by shifting and realigning the form and function of a targeted system.”²¹ The report *brings together in one place for the first time* the latest research, practice perspectives, technology assessment and stakeholder input to explore how to best foster systems change in the area of biofield science and healing. It also identifies assets, opportunities, challenges and levers for change in the system, and provides guidance for making our system more coherent, connected and impactful.

Through our year-long deep-dive into systems change, we learned a considerable amount about key barriers, opportunities and communities forwarding the science and practice of healing. Our *Subtle Energy and Biofield Healing: Evidence, Practice and Future Directions* report reveals many key discoveries, including the following:


- There is an **estimated subtle energy healing market of \$2 billion in revenue** which involves **millions of practitioners and patients**.
- There are **more than 250 subtle energy technologies currently being marketed despite little evidence behind them**.
- There are over **400 biofield researchers worldwide, and over 350 organizations worldwide** leading the charge in the science and practice of healing.

Getting resourced for healing

We are excited to share these discoveries with the community. *Beyond our comprehensive report, we share resources, databases and maps to help us all understand the bigger picture of healing, including:*

- A 15-page Executive Summary of the full report.²²
- A publicly available Publications Library with over 6000 peer review published articles in biofield science²³
- A web page of over 280 identified and indexed subtle energy and biofield-based technologies currently in the marketplace for diagnostic (measuring biofield activity) and therapeutic (modifying biofield activity) uses.²⁴
- A WorldWide Network Map that begins to share the number of organizations involved in healing research and practice²⁵
- Infographics that lay out the number of clinical studies as well as a systematic review of non-touch biofield therapies^{26,27}
- A Systems Change Map based on our learnings from stakeholders, that outlines key steps to take to bring healing most effectively to health-care and the public.²⁸

Now more than ever, it is time to take in what is working and explore the realm of possibilities for fostering regenerative healing. That includes how we look at ourselves and our capabilities for fostering healing in ourselves and others. Our collective community’s work in exploring the science, practice and impact of healing has never been more needed.

We created this report because we are passionate about scaling healing for humanity and see the promise in exploring the potential of human consciousness to help foster needed regeneration for ourselves and the planet, from the inside out. We invite you to check it out and share with others, as you see fit. Let us continue on the road to healing, together. 



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Dr. Shamini Jain



Read more on the full report at

<https://www.chi.is/systems-mapping-resources/>

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