

Vol. 282 No. 2,  
July 14, 1999

## Letters

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## A Close Look at Standards for Therapeutic Touch

**To the Editor:** In their response<sup>1</sup> to a letter by Dr Schmidt<sup>2</sup> received in response to their article,<sup>3</sup> Ms Rosa and coauthors state that "Dr Schmidt suggests that our test subjects might not have been sufficiently skilled. That would be impossible to determine because [Therapeutic Touch (TT)] has no accepted standards of training or practice."

This statement is incorrect. Nurse Healers—Professional Associates International, Inc (NH-PAI), the official organization for TT, has had Standards of Care, Scope of Practice, and Therapeutic Touch Policy and Procedure for Health Professionals in place for a number of years. The organization was founded in 1977 and has had criteria for practice and teaching, including levels of advancement for practitioners, in place for more than 8 years.

**Rebecca M. Good, MA, RNC, LPC**  
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<sup>1</sup>. Rosa L, Sarner L, Barrett S. An even closer look at Therapeutic Touch. *JAMA*. 1998;280:1908. [MEDLINE](#)

<sup>2</sup>. Freinkel A, Collins SB, Carpenter J, et al. An even closer look at Therapeutic Touch. *JAMA*. 1998;280:1905-1908. [MEDLINE](#)

<sup>3</sup>. Rosa L, Rosa E, Sarner L, Barrett S. A close look at Therapeutic Touch. *JAMA*. 1998;279:1005-1010. [MEDLINE](#)

**In Reply:** The existence of the documents to which Ms Good refers does not negate what we said about lack of accepted practice standards. NH-PAI's 1998 membership was 1100,<sup>1</sup> which we estimate to be less than 3%

of TT practitioners. *Meaningful* standards require demonstrable ability to perform a procedure. What NH-PAI refers to as standards requires no such demonstration.

To perform TT, a practitioner must detect and manipulate a "human energy field." None of the 21 practitioners we tested was able to do so. The American Holistic Nurses Association requires no such ability for "certification" in Healing Touch (a TT variant), nor do workshops offered by NH-PAI, Healing Touch International, or the Theosophical Society of America involve any objective determination of ability to practice TT after the workshop has been completed. An NH-PAI Web site even stated that "Whereas . . . energy flow can not be currently measured" . . . NH-PAI opposes certification/credentialing of TT practitioners.<sup>2</sup>

States that accept continuing education credits for such TT nursing courses as those offered by the American Nurses' Association or published in the *American Journal of Nursing* also show no concern for a TT student's actual ability to deliver therapeutic benefit. One author advises: "After reading about therapeutic touch, you may want to experiment with this modality on friends and colleagues before trying it with your patients."<sup>3</sup> Can you imagine credentialing physicians in this way?

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<sup>1</sup>. Travers B. *Encyclopedia of Medical Organizations and Agencies* . 7th ed; Gale Research: Detroit, Mich: 1998; 205.

<sup>2</sup>. Nurse Healers—Professional Associates International Inc. Position statement on TT certification/credentialing. Available at: <http://www.familyforum.com/nhpa/about.htm>. Accessed March 25, 1999.

<sup>3</sup>. Mackey RB. Complementary modalities, part 1: discover the healing power of therapeutic touch. *Am J Nurs*. 1995;95:26-33. [MEDLINE](#)

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***Edited by Margaret A. Winker, MD, Deputy Editor, and Phil B. Fontanarosa, MD, Interim Coeditor.***



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