Healers in the UK - who are they and what do they do?

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 Professor Paul Dieppe

Paul Dieppe is a retired rheumatologist and Public Health academic who now works on the phenomenology of healing in the UK.  He holds emeritus positions at the Universities of Exeter and Bristol

Why am I working on healing? My first reason is from personal experience, my first of healing events when I was only 16 and since then other examples of what might be called ‘ineffable’ or ‘spiritual’ experiences which have always intrigued me. The second was from my work on placebo which is the best analgesic we have by quite a long way and the inadequacy of all the biomedical explanations we have for this. So about 10 or 12 years ago I decided rather than placebo effect I would call it healing. My presumption was that healers and many other CAM practitioners would largely be working with the placebo effect. So that was my starting point. But I didn’t realise how completely wrong I was.

Does healing work?

This, the first question people usually ask me, is actually rather a stupid question for all sorts of reasons, one of which is its binary nature. I will however try to answer it. The first answer is YES. There are many controlled trials and meta-analyses, and evidence from fMRI and other imaging studies. But the interesting thing is that it works as well or better on plants, seeds and in-vitro preparations as on humans and animals. So we have to conclude that it is *not* ‘just a placebo’. Indeed however you define this for it to have an effect on seeds etc. seems at least a bit strange, so healing is in fact not a placebo at all. I realise now that it is a lot more interesting than that.

My research on healing over the last decade has involved interviewing healers and their clients; I have experienced a variety of healing interventions myself; I have learnt how to do energy healing. I have also done some work involving public engagement such as eliciting public views, organising exhibitions and giving presentations at festivals etc. So I have been having fun in this intriguing field.

There are probably around 30,000 healers working in the UK (about the same number as there are of GPs), but it many work ‘underground’ because of ridicule by the medical/scientific community. This figure comes from the companies that insure them;

premiums are idiotically low (by our medical standards) as there are very few claims and what they do seems to be safe.

 We did a rather low quality survey of UK healers\* and some of their clients in conjunction with the Confederation of Healing Organisations, of which I was on their board for several years, which is an overarching charity for the huge number of such organisations in the UK.

\*Rahtz E, Child S, Knight S, Warber SL, **Dieppe** P (2019). Clients of UK **healers**: a mixed methods survey of their demography, health problems, and experiences of **healing** [Clients of UK healers: A mixed methods survey of their demography, health problems, and experiences of healing - ScienceDirect](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1744388118306601)

Of the healers taking part the average age was 57, 76% were female and they described themselves as spiritual healers, energy healers, Reiki healers and crystal Healers.

The numbers are very small (39)and respondents are not representative, but these figures and notations accord with my wider experiences and discussions with healers and their organisations in the UK. There are differences in other countries: in the US for example there is more emphasis on healing touch but I don’t think the categorisation matters very much.

 Out of 278 consultations, the conditions clients consulted about were:

* Mental health issues 47%
* Pain 29%
* Specific Disease 18%
* General Healing 11%
* Fatigue 10%
* Other 27%

(The figures add up to more than 100% because co-morbidities were common amongst clients of healers)

The main changes that clients reported were relaxation in 173 of them, improved wellbeing in 141, altered sensations in 76 and less pain in 40, (many reporting more than one effect).

I want to say a little about the phenomenon of altered sensation. I found two other surveys in the literature, one from [?] Norway and the other from the USA and like us they reported this. They hadn’t specifically asked about this or sought it out and hadn’t sensitised people to reporting it and it was expressed spontaneously the experience of varying changes in sensation. There are quite a lot of different ones: the commonest ones include altered temperature, parasthesiae , seeing coloured lights, and a number of others. This is interesting and indicative that something is going on.

So what are healers actually doing?

This is where it gets difficult: Healing is an experiential issue that is unique to any specific individual or context and not easily described or defined.

 I have experienced it and learnt how to do it. I now liken it to love: you know what it is but you can’t define or even describe it. If you ask people to describe love you get a huge diversity of replies and language often seems inadequate. What is happening is hard to pin down. Some sort of energy healing is the most common in this country and what I have mainly experienced myself.

The only way of getting anywhere near an understanding of this is through stories. The first I would like to tell you is of the first time I had energy healing myself. Quite early on in my exploration I was seeking out healers and went to a nice house in the depth of the country. I knocked on the door and was warmly greeted be a lady of about 70. I explained that I was investigating the subject and asked her how she got into healing. She replied: “It was a funny business really; I didn’t know I was a healer until my husband got throat cancer a few years ago and the treatment wasn’t helping him, so we called in a healer to alleviate some of the symptoms. As he walked in the house he took one look at me and said ‘I see you’re a healer as well’. She didn’t understand what that meant. But then it happened again with another person who said I was a healer. So I decided to investigate it and went to some meetings and on some courses and found that I am indeed a healer. I started doing it in the front room here.” So she takes me into the front room and said “healing is about experiencing things so don’t let’s talk too much” and she asked me if I had anything that needed healing. I have osteoarthritis in my knee joints and at the time my right knee was so bad I had actually seen an orthopaedic colleague to consider surgery. So I told her about this; she said ‘I’m quite good at knees, and I’ll have a go’ and asked me to roll up my trouser leg. She put her hands on my knee and then she disappeared from the room. This is tricky to describe: she was physically there and yet she was not there – she had gone. I was recording this and thinking I’m wasting batteries because she wasn’t saying anything and my mind was saying this is nonsense. This went on for a few minutes and then she reappeared in the room and sighed and said “oh dear, that really is a pretty bad knee. I’ve made a bit of progress but let’s take a breather.” So we had a chat, and then she said she would like to have another go. The same thing happened: she put her hands on my knee, disappeared and reappeared and said that was all she could do that day. I thought this is just silly, it isn’t going to work. But after this for more than 10 years I had almost no trouble with my knee, although it has been a little more troublesome lately.

 I don’t know if that was actually the healing but it was an extraordinary experience and is the sort of thing that happens with healing. It doesn’t make sense; it is difficult to describe and isn’t a placebo.

Here’s another story. I told you at the beginning that one of the enigmas about healing and suggests that it is beyond the realms is that it works with plants and in vitro preparations etc. There is quite an easy way of demonstrating this with cress. Cress seeds germinate and sprout very quickly. If you apply healing to them they do better within a few days. After going on a course on how to do this sort of stuff I thought I would try the cress experiment; I was a bit sceptical from my scientific background but it worked astonishingly well; the tray I applied it to germinated much more quickly and the shoots were taller than the control tray. So these things are out there and going on.

This experiential issue is at the core.

*The experience you mentioned when you were 16 – what was that?*

I ruptured a kidney playing rugby. I went on playing but lost a lot of blood and went to hospital where they found the damaged kidney and I was in danger of dying. So they decided to remove the kidney to stop the bleeding. The one thing I remember very vividly was the surgical team coming to my bedside looking very grave. They asked me how I was feeling and I immediately felt fantastically well; I knew that everything was going to be all right and there was no need to worry. The pain went and I sat up in bed and said I felt terrific. I stayed in this crazy state of bliss for some time and the consultant said he wouldn’t operate immediately. That is my memory of it, but I was told afterwards that pretty much at that exact time a prayer meeting had been held about me in the local church, so the attribution of these extraordinary events and the cancellation of surgery was put down to the prayer meeting. That was a quite devastating experience.

Now I want to return to the question: does healing ‘work’? When I told you about the evidence that it does from controlled trials and meta-analyses, MRI and other imaging studies and that It works better on plants and in-vitro preparations than in does on humans and animals, I didn’t say what was being tested. This is ‘Positive Intention\*’ . [The next part of the recording is very muffled and what follows is an approximation of Paul’s actual words but hopefully conveys their sense. Ed.]

 What then do healers themselves say about this and what do they regard as the keys to healing? The themes that have emerged from 20 in-depth healing interviews are that they mostly say it is about energy flow, channelling energy, and energy balance. They say you have to let go of your own ego.

\*See Roe C et al:  Two meta-analyses of noncontact healing studies. Explore. 2015 11(1):11-23

The main thing is to “be there for another and concentrate on love and compassion” My conclusion is that this could be summed up as “focussed attention with good intention”. And that is what is being tested and that is what works.

So what then *is* going on?

The problem is that none of this makes any sense within a Western, Newtonian, materialistic world view. But nor do a lot of other things, such as beauty, wonder and awe, let alone many well validated metaphysical and para-psychological phenomena. I think healing is something that only makes sense within a different sort of paradigm: the Quantum mechanical view of the world; the ‘post-materialist revolution’, in relation to the concept of ‘non-locality’; and the idea embodied in the word ‘panpsychism’: that consciousness/love is the fundamental essence of the universe. I have come to the conclusion that the idea that consciousness is just something produced by our brains is rather silly, and I am now a panpsychist.

Discussion

*Could you tell us a bit more about who becomes a healer and what the process of becoming a healer entails? - and the ways in which that differs from becoming a ‘normal’ healthcare professional? I don’t know if you know Kath Miller’s book about traditional healers. She is an anthropologist who writes about her time in the Himalayas. How do Western healers differ from traditional healers?*

My experience has been gleaned from the 20-odd healers I have interviewed and some of the literature. I can’t say I have all the answers. But I have been very struck by the familial trait. A large percentage of those I have spoken to tell me there is someone in the family, often a grandmother or aunt who was a healer. From a very early age they recognised unusual things about themselves that suggested they might have an aptitude for healing, and as well as this background they have been exposed to it. A lot of healers and then when recognise all the experiences in life don’t fit the normal way of understanding the world. A lot of them don’t like to say what these experiences are because they think they will be put on drugs and locked away in a loony bin. They see things and hear things and intuit things about other people. I felt somehow very closely connected to some of the healers when I was speaking to them. A lot of the experiences they relate date from a very young age, as was the realisation that they might have the potential to become healers themselves.

 There are however quite a lot of charlatans out there because the placebo effect makes sure they get good results. But the serious people undergo a lot of training provided by their organisations who take their science and the necessity to train people to protect themselves very seriously. Some of them regard it as a business, but a lot of them do it without charge.

 I have much less experience with Shamanic healing.

*So you are suggesting that healers are born and not made, so healing can’t be taught in medical schools or you can’t go on a healing course and learn if you are not that way inclined. I believe there is a big Shamanic scene in the UK. I have a friend who is a Shaman and another who has suffered serious illness and prefers Shamanic healing to any other form of therapy. My understanding is that there is a process of experiencing illness that is part of the journey of becoming a healer. You have to know what it is to suffer in a way you don’t within medical education. Is that true?*

Not strictly. I have looked into training for healers and that was not part of the script. People who run courses are very open to people coming on. But the question as to whether anyone can do it is something I have asked and got varying answers, I think the best is that it’s a bit like playing a piano: anyone can do it but not many can be skilled pianists.

*Is there any difference between good healers and people who have uncanny experiences like seeing things and hearing things and hallucinations? At a meeting of the College of Psychotherapy that I belong to devoted to spiritual issues we discussed this, and at one point this question was put to the audience. It was suggested that such dissociative experiences might lead to a diagnosis of psychotic illness and people put on antipsychotic drugs rather than becoming healers. Is there a relationship between these things?*

I think there is. I don’t have anything to support that but spiritual or noetic experiences seem to be frequent among healers. Hallucination is a slightly pejorative term but they do see things and hear things unlike other people

Noetic experiences which large numbers of us have these occasionally in life and are those moments when suddenly sense that you are part of something bigger and that you are connected in some strange way with the whole world - you *know* what is goingon.They are usually fleeting but the often have a dramatic effect on peoples’ lives. I have had such experiences

*So you are a healer?*

I don’t do it – I’m a bit scared of it to be honest. At the courses I went to I was told I was very powerful, and I have had experiences on these courses that suggest that might be the case. And I certainly have had relevant experiences in my life but I have practiced conventional medicine for most of my life …

… *are their other experiences you feel able to share with us?*

I can tell you of one other that may be more representative of most peoples’ sense of connection. This was in Canada and I was walking by a river and had got a little separated from my friends. I was just strolling along when I had a sudden sensation of joy and connection; I became part of that stream and the place; it was something loving, something much bigger, something beautiful; it was absolutely awesome. I have no idea how long it lasted – it may only have been seconds. I think, from what I have read, that that is typical of peoples’ noetic experiences.

*I had a similar experience. I was on top of a mountain in New Zealand* *at night and it was the first time I had seen the whole milky way. I suddenly felt …it was a very weird experience … that I was a small but significant part … seemed to be part of something much bigger. It was a very strange sensation – it just happened like that …*

*I don’t know if anybody has read the Pet Shop by Jane Taylor who is a neuroanatomist. She had a haemorrhage that shut down the left side of her brain so she was aphasic. She describes a similar sort of euphoria and being connected with the universe etc. and being enormous and above her body and that sort of thing …*

*… Her right brain was unleashed …*

*She never forgot it and it was totally life-changing. You can get a similar thing with psychedelic drugs – is there a link?*

We probably can reproduce some of these experiences chemically, and they have been seen after brain damage. But I would be upset if this was thought to be imply that these things could be explained neurophysiologically as I think that’s not the case.

*So any kind of physical explanation is going to be wrong here?*

This is very difficult. The problem is that if you have had had this sort of experience you kind of *know* that it is not physically explicable, but other people don’t know that. I actually *know* it’s not explicable in purely materialistic terms. That sounds terribly arrogant …

*…you can try to tie it up with Quantum theory and that sort of thing, which hardly anyone understands anyway, but does it actually matter whether we know or not?*

That’s a brilliant question. I don’t actually think it matters a damn. But I think it does matter that we accept our ignorance and stop the arrogance of thinking our understanding of science can explain everything.

*It’s funny listening to you – for years I have been practicing as a music therapist and having noetic experiences and connections with people in palliative care which is where I work. But I would never presume to use the word healing for the connections through music and the breathing which is the way I work.*

 *I had forgotten my science so I went off to Kings where I did a masters and now a PhD and it is interesting how I could feel my scepticism diminishing. Ten or fifteen years ago I was different but now I am asking questions like could you use this methodology to unpick what is going on because that is what I am doing now – I am asking questions about these things that happen between people who are supporting each other in contexts where they are trying to help and be alongside them. I am sick of my work being stigmatised, undervalued and under-resourced etc.*

We could do [?] research but it is difficult. One of the problems is that we have looked to science but ignored the humanities. So now we are trying to develop studies which are actually led by people from arts and humanities rather than science because such people can deal with the contradictions in a better way but have a massive amount to contribute to gaining some sort of understanding and a better sense of what sort of questions would be worth asking and channels worth pursuing. So we need the music therapists, the painters, religious scholars, anthropologists and other folks alongside science to try to formulate what it is that we are trying to understand.

*Funding for this sort of thing would be very nice*

That’s what we are trying to do!

*The recent literature on measuring the connection between patient and therapist … and how much you believe that a particular kind of therapy is going to work … is very thin. There used to be much more work on making that connection even within allopathic or biomedicine or Western medicine or whatever you call it. As you know so much depends on that connection between the physician and the patient particularly in the case of pain. The first thing you do is to isolate … if someone has infectious disease like Covid-19 that’s one thing but if someone has pain or stomach problems or headache that’s another. When I worked in China I did a study of the outcomes of acupuncture and I am curious as to why you don’t include acupuncture as healing - within the context of China and not so much here in the US. Second of all I am puzzled by some of the things I saw in China where they use acupuncture for stroke rehabilitation for which it is very effective. I can’t explain why. So can you say acupuncture heals?*

That’s a very interesting question which applies to other things like cranial osteopathy. What I was trying to do initially was look at those people who were not using any specific intervention other than themselves. It is about connection, and I agree with you entirely that it also applies to conventional medicine. I have actually interviewed a number of doctors and other healthcare professionals, some of whom use acupuncture and some homeopathy as adjuncts to their work. I can tell you more about homeopathy than about acupuncture; I think homeopathy is a magnificent I don’t think it has anything to do with the medicines but it is fantastically good at connecting with people and helping them to understand their problems and it is outrageous that our profession …

*[barely audible ->] Unless they are saying this is down to [?] dilution? I’m training in psychotherapy at the moment ….seeing people for time and time again they come up with …positive regard is at the core … love is at the centre of psychoanalysis… Talking to people who follow different schools of psychotherapy …. All these things: positive regard, being with people, being less judgmental, are aspects of … a sense of what it is to be human in this universe.*

Wonderful – I couldn’t have said it better Love is as difficult to define as …

*Psychotherapy training is becoming very academic now so a lot of people are being cut out of it because they are not academics. I used to teach psychotherapy when it was less academic but now it’s jumping through hoops. It’s time to get a balance: you were talking about bringing in humanities people – it’s not just the scientific part.*

*It reminds me of the way nursing changed from being touchy-feely, caring, hands on looking after patients to being more academic. They stripped away all that stuff because it’s not measurable. The art of caring was lost – it was all about numbers and statistics; it’s dehumanised it.*

 *Do you think that there are quite a lot of people who are accidentally doing healing in the course of their lives, like parents with their children, medics and therapists, generally looking after people – and some healing is accidentally happening?*

I have interviewed lot of doctors and nurses who are very good healers but interestingly most of them say “I don’t like to think of myself as a healer”. People in our profession are almost embarrassed about being called a healer. I think lots of us are healers without recognising it.

*Being kind and empathetic and wanting to be there for someone in the room and all these things … you are saying is that however much you want to do some people just can’t help doing it, and it’s a natural thing; but perhaps some of us have to work at it. So what do people say it* feels *like to have this spiritual skill?*

When healing moments occur they are reciprocal. That is a common thread in the conversations and experiences I have had. They are about these moments of connection which positively affect both people. And that is just terrific. Such moments heal both parties.

*You mentioned the importance of using the humanities. There is a Consortium for International Communication in Healthcare\* run by linguists and language specialists. I have worked with a linguist which has been extremely helpful for working out what patients were saying particularly on a forum and next week we are running a webinar on the use of fora and how linguists can help with fora and social media.*

\* https://www.ucl.ac.uk/ioe/departments-and-centres/centres/centre-applied-linguistics/international-consortium-communication-health-care

 *And so much is about the language we use in healthcare. I was appalled to hear in my patient support groups words like ‘horrendous’ pain, ‘fighting’, ‘devastating’ disease and so on which give such negative vibes and then we wonder why no healing occurs.*

*Language is so important. The need for metaphor and people who talk in storiesis very much part of being human*

*Regarding language: you tried to describe healing and it came out as a kind of subjective and phenomenological thing which is quite ill-defined. Healthcare professionals talk about treating, curing or palliating and symptom control, but we don’t talk about healing. Would healers and people who experience healing define it differently from the way health professionals do. In what way?*

The problem is knowing what we are trying to define: whether healing as used as a noun or an adjective or is describing a process or a stage. It is very difficult linguistically to convey what healing means. The most widely used definition in the literature shares the concepts of wholeness, integrity and transcending suffering or allowing people to transcend their suffering. People who have undergone healing report that pain hasn’t gone but it doesn’t matter much anymore. The other concept which is at the centre of what healing means is the idea of mind body and  *soul* interaction – not just body mind - and being an integral whole.

*An acupuncture clinic in China is wonderfully safe and relaxing. I agree that you can’t do placebo healing; just like you can’t do placebo acupuncture. This is a biomedical construction because if the acupuncturist pushes the needles in at the wrong point and thinks this is part of a control clinical trial then he doesn’t understand acupuncture, because he has to believe it works. I wonder if this could be tested by randomising people who are receiving doctor therapy (which in the US is still* *opioids for chronic non-malignant pain) and music therapy or a traditional healer and see if they are feasible because these would do much less damage than opioid therapy. Would that be a logical research design ?*

That could be described as a pragmatic trial as opposed to a controlled one. I’ve been meaning for a long time to write a paper on why controlled trials in this field should be ditched. I guess pragmatic trials might work but they are difficult and expensive to do and there will be all sorts of barriers; but it is a reasonable approach to take.

*Does healing depend on the healer’s own state of health or wellbeing and whether they can do this kind of thing to someone if they are in the same state themselves?*

A super question and I don’t really know the answer. But a lot of the training is about being in the right state of mind when you are with the other person and there is a huge emphasis amongst the healing professions on the strange technique of trying to connect yourself ….. to get your state of mind right and prepare yourself properly before you meet with a client . The other thing healers have consistently told me is that you need to love yourself, and allow yourself to love the other person unconditionally and then banish your ego from the room … It’s about your state of mind when you’re with the other person on top of the basis of understanding yourself.

*That’s very interesting because I teach a form of Tai Chi and that is what we are told to do*

[*from chat] “Hurt People Hurt – Healed People Heal” . What about The Wounded Healer?*

*I have thought and read a lot about this. There are a lot of wounded healers who are not themselves healed. There are people all around me [in General Practice] who are burning out and giving up medicine because the carapace that protected them is not enough under the present circumstances. There is an amazing video about Chiron, the man-horse who was shot with a poisoned arrow and the wound never healed. He is the archetype of the wounded healer. My understanding of the difference between healers and doctors is that there is a need for the former examine their own wounds and being at least in the process of healing, if not actually healed. If you are to be a healer you need to be in touch with your own woundedness in a way that I don’t think doctors are and that is one thing that ails us. The majority of health professionals, especially if you work in mental health, psychotherapy or chronic pain are wounded healers. There are plenty of studies looking at how much trauma of people who do those kind of jobs have had. The failure to acknowledge your wounds and to be healed leads to all kinds of trauma being replicated later on.*

 *So can I ask you, Paul, whether in your experience healers are more aware than we are of their own wounds and have engaged with their own healing? Can we learn something from that?*

I would frame the issue slightly differently [the rest of this reply and much of PD’s subsequent contributions are inaudibly muffled]

*Healing and being healed is about acknowledging the vulnerable child, isn’t it?*

*When you think about nearly all medics and most health professionals apart from psychotherapists, we have no supervision or mentors. It seems like we have to plod along unsupported and unsurprisingly lots of medics turn to drugs and whatnot. Looking after themselves is not part of the macho culture.*

One thing healers learn is how to protect themselves. A lot of burnout we see is from taking on people’s suffering: ( ‘condensed empathy’) A lot of healthcare is in the relationship of compassionate doctor and pathic patient. We don’t want the doctor to be empathic …. Compassion is not empathy. Healers understand this but they do explain it differently …. dealing with vulnerability. I never understood any of this when I was practicing medicine and I wish I had

Quote from chat: “The man who is wise, therefore, will see his life as more like a reservoir than a canal. The canal simultaneously pours out what it receives; the reservoir retains the water till it is filled, then discharges the overflow without loss to itself ... Today there are many in the Church who act like canals, the reservoirs are far too rare ... You too must learn to await this fullness before pouring out your gifts, do not try to be more generous than God.”― Bernard of Clairvaux, On the Song of Songs

One of the key research techniques using a phenomenological approach is getting people to draw pictures. We approached people at random and asked them if they would like to take part in research; then we asked them to draw the first thing that came to mind when we asked a question. There was no priming. For instance we asked them what they understood about healing or something and they might draw a tree – and suddenly they would realise why they had chosen this. It’s been fascinating and allows metaphors to emerge and allows people to access insights and understandings that they didn’t know they had.

*You tried this at a SIG meeting you addressed some years ago and I noticed that the doctors and physios tended draw broken bones when they thought about healing*

*If I want to be a healer can I just call myself one or do I have to be practicing in a particular modality of healing? You were told that you were a natural healer so can you introduce yourself as Professor Dieppe, doctor and healer? Most healers, like energy or crystal healers or Shamans or whatever, guard their accreditation fairly closely but can I say I’m a non-denominational healer?*

Yes you can and some people do but most healers I have come across are members of the Confederation of Healing Organisations and proud of this and to abide by its ethical principles which are very strong

*Although a bit agnostic I am happy to entertain some of these ideas but there is one thing that is critical and relevant to the healing process: and that is that there is a sense of connectivity between people and the world and the environment. There is definitely a … of living in the individual – something in the individual that brings out that continuous life that develops in the organism, that adapts and prepares the organism. In the process … some positive correlates … There is a sense that each and every intervention isn’t the healing itself, but it is a push or a pull or a nudge towards the organism itself taking over what needs to be done.*

*I wanted to ask you a practical question about healing courses. I presume everyone has some innate skill and it would be good to develop that. What would any of us do if we wanted to go on such a course? Is it something you would recommend and what would we do to manage that?*

I would recommend it if you feel strong enough. In my experience this is quite tough stuff, but you said you were training in psychotherapy which is also pretty tough stuff. The Confederation of Healing Organisations run courses on a regular basis. They are a bit wary of people from the medical profession and you might struggle a bit to get on one. The course I was on also included one clinical psychologist but the others were all lay people. I was very open with the other participants about my agenda and they accepted that. Don’t do it lightly. The ones I went on were weekends but …

*Are there any risks to the healer? You said you were a bit reluctant – even afraid …*

There are risks and you have to protect yourself properly. Energy flow is talked about a lot … you can pick up peoples’ pain and anger and that can be hard to deal with and one of the things they teach you on these courses is how to deal with that.

Points from chat

I think being a healer is often an experiential transformative experience not a career choice ..Often profound emotional shifts may occur - quickly and out of the ordinary …I have felt this and its seldom felt in a NHS setting that’s for sure ?!

I wonder if there’s a kind of “colonialism” at work in how these practices are stigmatised.

Why are these types of healing practices shunned by traditional medicine?? If its not evidenced sufficiently (who decides that?) then its rubbish!

I’d like to see a trial comparing non-healers “healing” as a placebo vs. True healers healing. I think that would be very interesting

There are ethical considerations - there are frauds out there - but then there are frauds perpetuated in the medical system as well

It’s to protect patients. Otherwise anyone could suggest anything as treatment without any proof of how well it works. It doesn’t mean that we don’t try things that don’t have sufficient evidence, it just means we may try things with more evidence first

People are often desperate for relief and will try anything and pay anything which leaves them open to abuse from fraudsters! Is there any kind of regulatory body for healers though, how do people know if someone is good or not?

Is an ayahuasca ceremony healing? Ayahuasca is an entheogen. Are entheogens/ entactogens\* intrinsically healing?

lots of suggestion that ayahuasca is brilliant for opioid dependence

Jeff Rediger's book 'Cured' is about the science and stories of spontaneous healing and recovery, and he concludes that the healed people all made significant changes to their lives

I think that there are things that can be explained but it’s very far from the entire experience. similar to how we can explain our minds in just in neurophysical terms etc.

Presence - Focused attention, open awareness and kind intention, is more than placebo (a sugar pill) isn't this enough to explain the effects - Dan Seigel explains this with neuroscience

 As a Buddhist and someone who believes in healing, but also someone who is trained to ask questions and always find “the why” in processes, it’s difficult to find that internal balance and know what’s right or wrong. I guess the answer will be somewhere in the middle, it’s good to question and investigate but also accepting there are probably some things in this world we will never fully understand with a scientific model

Is healing (like validation) something that patients experience, rather than/ something that healers do? What's the connection?

I still to this day say my best treatment outcome comes from sitting with a patient, talking to them and holding their hand if appropriate. I’ve walked out of rooms after 2 hours and the nurse has been like “great, the patient’ not in pain! What did you do!” And I’ve said “I spoke to them” and I get this look as if to say “that’s it….” But it’s a powerful tool compassion, listening and empathy

Maureen , agree , physiotherapy a spin off from nursing based on ‘hands on’ is now computerised ‘hands off’ based on spurious evidence ! That leads to Jonathan’s excellent article on self care and embodiment. Many of the healing practices are not cognitive and shift attention to sensory systems which are often dormant in the present age i.e. touch/sound/calm spaces — these are missing from modern life and modern health care settings hence how practices (formalised practices like energy healing etc are in different spaces and settings)

\* Entheogens are**psychoactive substances that induce alterations in perception, mood, consciousness, cognition, or behaviour for the purposes of engendering spiritual development or otherwise in sacred contexts.**

Entactogens are a class of [psychoactive drugs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychoactive_drug) that produce experiences of emotional communion, oneness, relatedness, emotional openness—that is, empathy or sympathy

Here's my paper on therapeutic presence and embodiment <https://abetternhs.net/2021/09/29/on-being-present-emotions-are-contagious/>

If anyone is interested in facial pain Joanna Zak and I did a video recently about facial pain aiming to talk about self-management but we also talk about the language used as she just said - its a great resource even if I say so myself! <https://my.livewellwithpain.co.uk/festival/main-stage/facing-up-to-pain-exploring-facial-pain-video-conversation-with-prof-zak/>

Kristin Neff said Health Care professionals that don't practice self compassion are at risk of burning out!

Is there any such thing as a “healed” human? Don’t we all have our own wounds or scars at some level? My interpretation is a healer is not a perfect or healed person, but an empathetic and content soul that’s vulnerable and able to heal others despite one’s own suffering

think that a compassionate doctor (enabled by focussed attention, open awareness and kind intention) helps an empathic patient feel safe and cared for at a subconscious / neuroceptive level. People who have experienced trauma are often acutely sensitive to nociception /empathy

There are a lot of shamanic courses in the UK and ayahuasca ceremonies and a wide range of other healing modalities.