

An Energetic Response

Northwest Reiki Association Partners with Compass Oncology

by Michael Adkins

For many patients, the stresses of enduring chemotherapy and the rest of their cancer treatment regimens can be overwhelming. Finding ways to combat this stress, to relax and to maintain a positive focus is a challenge.

For the past few years, Compass Oncology and its patients have had an ally in overcoming that challenge: the Northwest Reiki Association (NWRA).

The NWRA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to the practice of Reiki (pronounced "RAY-key"). As described by the International Center for Reiki Training, Reiki is "a Japanese technique for stress reduction and relaxation that also promotes healing." The technique involves a Reiki practitioner placing his or her hands on an individual and letting energy flow from the practitioner to the recipient.

The NWRA's website notes that Reiki "brings about deep relaxation ... detoxifies the system, [and] provides new vitality in the form of 'universal life energy.'"

According to Kathryn Misetich, president of NWRA's Board of Directors and a certi-



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fied Reiki practitioner, NWRA volunteers have been practicing Reiki in Compass Oncology clinics for five years — starting with the West clinic in Portland and then expanding to the Rose Quarter and East clinics. "We as practitioners are just the instruments," she explained. "We allow the energy to flow into the client where it's most needed. We don't have any control where it goes." Misetich added that Reiki is quite similar to acupuncture, though Reiki practitioners use only their hands.

Unlike many treatments and therapies in Western medicine, Misetich noted, "There are no side effects. The more the body can relax, and the more the body can naturally heal, the better people feel." Misetich added that the NWRA offers free Reiki classes for Compass Oncology patients and caregivers. In the class, practitioners teach participants to perform Reiki on themselves and others, receiving therapeutic benefits from both methods.

The benefits patients receive from Reiki treatments have been noted by several

Compass Oncology professionals. Llona Olinghouse, RN, recalled her experience when a group of NWRA practitioners provided Reiki to a group of nursing staff members. "The experience was very relaxing, and I experienced a total-body warmth during the session," she said. "It would have been very easy to drift off to sleep if given a very quiet setting. I was amazed how warm the practitioners' hands become during the session."

These volunteers provide Reiki free of charge in Compass Oncology's infusion clinics, according to Rob Beach, RN. "We have many patients who look forward to getting Reiki while they are in the infusion room," Beach said. "Patients report a deep sense of relaxation, pain relief and a general sense of well-being."

Compass Oncology nurses often talk about Reiki to new patients receiving infusion therapy and ask them if they would like to receive it. Patients who are familiar with the NWRA volunteer practitioners frequently request Reiki during their chemotherapy treatments, according to Justin Gress, practice manager at Compass Oncology's West and Tualatin offices.

"We see a lot of the same volunteer practitioners in our office, which helps build that relationship," Gress said. "It's always nice for patients to see another familiar face. Reiki has become another great added service patients can enjoy in our treatment rooms."

Misetich added, "When you see people in the Compass Oncology chemotherapy suite wearing blue polo shirts, be sure to ask them about Reiki."

For more information about the Northwest Reiki Association, please visit www.nwreikiassociation.org. For more information about Reiki, please click on the "What Is Reiki?" tab on the association's website or visit the International Center for Reiki Training at www.reiki.org.