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Reiki improves heart rate homeostasis in laboratory rats

Ann Linda Baldwin [1], Christina Wagers, Gary E Schwartz

Affiliations
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Abstract

Objectives: To determine whether application of Reiki to noise-stressed rats can reduce their heart rates (HRs) and blood pressures.

Rationale: In a previous study, we showed that exposure of rats to 90 dB white noise for 15 minutes caused their HRs and blood pressures to significantly increase. Reiki has been shown to significantly decrease HR and blood pressure in a small group of healthy human subjects. However, use of humans in such studies has the disadvantage that experimental interpretations are encumbered by the variable of belief or skepticism regarding Reiki. For that reason, noise-stressed rats were used as an animal model to test the efficacy of Reiki in reducing elevated HR and blood pressure.

Design: Three unrestrained, male Sprague-Dawley rats implanted with radiotelemetric transducers were exposed daily for 8 days to a 15-minute white noise regimen (90 dB). For the last 5 days, the rats received 15 minutes of Reiki immediately before the noise and during the noise period. The experiment was repeated on the same animals but using sham Reiki.

Setting/location: The animals were housed in a quiet room in University of Arizona Animal Facility.

Outcome measures: Mean HRs and blood pressure were determined before Reiki/sham Reiki, during Reiki/sham Reiki, and during the noise in each case.

Results: Reiki, but not sham Reiki, significantly reduced HR compared to initial values. With Reiki, there was a high correlation between change in HR and initial HR, suggesting a homeostatic effect. Reiki, but not sham Reiki, significantly reduced the rise in HR produced by exposure of the rats to loud noise. Neither Reiki nor sham Reiki significantly affected blood pressure.

Conclusion: Reiki is effective in modulating HR in stressed and unstressed rats, supporting its use as a stress-reducer in humans.

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