



## Effects of Therapeutic Touch on Fatigue in Cancer Patients

**Melike Demir Doğan\***

*Gümüşhane University, Faculty of Health Sciences, Turkey*

**\*Corresponding Author:** Melike Demir Doğan Assistant Professor, Gümüşhane University, Faculty of Health Sciences, Turkey.

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### Abstract

**Introduction:** The aim of this review was to determine the effects of therapeutic touch on fatigue in cancer patients.

**Methods:** Articles were searched on PubMed and Google Scholar. This review includes randomized controlled trials and case reports from 2010 - 2018.

**Results:** 24 studies were found on PubMed and 16,700 studies were found on Google Scholar search. Only two articles met the established review criteria in PubMed and four articles met the established review criteria in Google Scholar. Two articles in PubMed and Google Scholar are the same. In total, four articles were included in the study.

**Conclusion:** The results of this study show that therapeutic touch may decrease fatigue in cancer patients.

**Keywords:** Therapeutic Touch; Fatigue; Cancer Patients

### Introduction

Cancer is a chronic disease and one of the most common side effects of cancer treatment is fatigue [1-4]. Fatigue can be defined as a state of mental and physical fatigue involving all these concepts, weakness, exhaustion and exhaustion [5,6]. A systematic review reported prevalence rates for fatigue ranged from 46% to 96% [7-9] and 30% of them still have fatigue after several years of treatment [10,11]. The others studies reported patients had experienced fatigue about 80% to 96% for cancer patients receiving chemotherapy and 60% to 93% for patients also undergoing radiation therapy [12,13].

Therapeutic Touch is a non-invasive nursing intervention which is based on the belief that the organism has an energy produced by aura [14,15]. When the living organism is sick, the handler tries to regulate the distorted energy field by moving on the patient's body. Therapeutic touch application usually takes 10 - 20 minutes depending on the practitioners detection capability of the amount of space that these imbalances and energy blockages [15].

Touch therapy recommended in American Society of Clinical Oncology Clinical Practice Guideline [10]. A study found that therapeutic touch can be an acceptable method for reducing physical and psychological symptoms of patients with cancer [16]. In an

other study, therapeutic touch recipients reported mental benefits such as mood, feelings of well-being, interpersonal relationships, and expressed satisfaction with treatment as well as reduced pain and fatigue [17]. So that, the aim of this review was to determine the effects of therapeutic touch on fatigue in cancer patients.

### Materials and Methods

Articles were researched in PubMed and Google Scholar. This review includes randomized controlled trials from 2010 - 2018. The following search limits were utilized: (a) English only; (b) random assignment, either placebo or control; (c) peer-reviewed journals; (d) abstracts; (e) full text. We searched for cancer, therapeutic touch, randomized controlled study as keywords. We found 24 studies in the PubMed search and 16,700 studies in the Google Scholar search. Only two articles met the established review criteria in PubMed and four articles met the established review criteria in Google Scholar. Two articles in PubMed and Google Scholar are the same. So that four articles were included in the study.

### Results and Discussion

Four randomized controlled trials were conducted to evaluate the effect of therapeutic touch on reducing the fatigue of cancer patients (Table 1).

Studies	Sample	Methods	Results
Aghabati, <i>et al.</i> 2010 (18)	Three-arm Randomized controlled trial TT (n = 30), Sham touch (n = 30), Control group (n = 30)	30 minutes session 1× day 5 days Rhoten Fatigue Scale (RFS)	Significant decrease in fatigue after second, third, and fourth session.
Lutgendorf, <i>et al.</i> 2010 (20)	Three-arm Randomized controlled trial therapeutic touch (n = 21) radiotherapy (n = 20) Standard care (n = 19)	therapeutic touch: 20-30 minutes sessions by three nurses radiotherapy: 20–25-minute sessions by three operators Standard care: Fourweekly sessions for six weeks	No difference in fatigue.
Post white., <i>et al.</i> 2003 (21)	Randomized, prospective, crossover trial massage therapy (n=63) therapeutic touch (n=56) Operator’s presence alone (n=45)	One weekly 45-minute session (massage therapy, therapeutic touch, or operator) for four weeks and usual care alone for four weeks Fatigue evaluated by Profile of Mood States	Significant decrease in fatigue
FitzHenry, <i>et al.</i> 2014 (19)	Randomized control trial control group (n=20) experimental group (n=21)	Control group experienced sham therapy once a week during RT. Experimental group was a 45-minute session of healing touch once a week during RT. Fatigue assessment with Brief Fatigue Inventory	No difference in fatigue.

**Table 1:** Randomized Controlled Studies about Therapeutic Touch.

A study which examine the effect of therapeutic touch on fatigue of the cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy, is a three-arm randomized controlled trial (therapeutic touch = 30, Sham touch= 30, Control group = 30). Fatigue was measured with the Rhoten Fatigue Scale and recorded by participants before and after the intervention for 5 days (once a day). The intervention consisted of 30 min therapeutic touch given once a day for 5 days. The result of this study showed that therapeutic touch decreased fatigue of the cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy than the usual care group [18].

One of the study which was design randomized clinical trial, was a university RT clinic with breast cancer patients. The control group (n = 20) experienced sham therapy once a week during RT and experimental group (n = 21) was a 45 minutes session of healing touch once a week during RT. Fatigue assessment with Brief Fatigue Inventory. This study’s findings do not support a beneficial effect of healing touch on fatigue [19].

Another study which was a three-arm randomized controlled trial, showed that no difference in fatigue. In this study, therapeutic touch group (n = 21) was a 20 – 30 minutes sessions by three nurs-

es. Radiotherapy group (n = 20) was a 20 – 30 minutes sessions by three operators and standard care group (n = 19) was four weekly sessions for six weeks. Fatigue assessment with Rhoten Fatigue Scale and Fatigue Symptom Inventory [20].

One of the other study which was randomized, prospective, crossover trial, reported that therapeutic touch decreased fatigue of the cancer patients (massage therapy = 63, therapeutic touch = 56, Operator’s presence alone = 45). Patients received one weekly 45 minutes session (massage therapy, therapeutic touch, or operator) for four weeks and usual care alone for four weeks. Fatigue evaluated by Profile of Mood States [21].

At the end of this study; Therapeutic touch seems to reduce fatigue in only two of the 4 studies studied. So that the therapeutic touch can reduce fatigue in cancer patients.

**Conclusion**

Looking at the studies done, it is seen that there are few sample numbers. Therapeutic touch seems to reduce fatigue in only two of the 4 studies studied. It also seems that this method can be used as a safe method in the management of fatigue in cancer patients.

So that therapeutic touch may decrease fatigue in cancer patients. However, further studies are needed to explore the impact of therapeutic touch on fatigue in cancer patients.

### Conflict of interest

There is no conflict of interest.

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