

# Brief to Advisory Panel on Healthcare Innovation

## Therapeutic Touch: Innovation to improve care and strengthen healthcare

### Purpose

Therapeutic Touch® Networks of Canada (TTNC) proposes that the use of Therapeutic Touch can make a difference in the quality of health care services in Canada for all Canadians, particularly in end of life care. Therapeutic Touch is a no risk, non-invasive, cost effective approach to care which can be used across the spectrum of disease processes and in all aspects of health care.

### Background

Therapeutic Touch is a holistic, evidence-based therapy that incorporates the intentional and compassionate use of universal energy to promote balance and well-being<sup>1</sup>.

Therapeutic Touch has been shown to be effective in populations often thought to be fragile, such as preterm babies, children, the elderly, people with cancer, and dementia<sup>2</sup>. In this submission we will focus on the use of Therapeutic Touch in Quality End of Life Care. Therapeutic Touch has been used extensively in this setting for decades and the philosophy and goals of Hospice Palliative Care<sup>3</sup> and Therapeutic Touch are similar and complementary.

Complementary therapies are increasingly used in palliative care as an adjunct to the standard management of symptoms to achieve an overall well-being for patients with malignant and non-malignant terminal illnesses<sup>4,5,6,7</sup>.

According to the Canadian Nurses Association, use of complementary and alternative therapies is on the rise in all adult populations. It is predicted that with the aging of the “Baby Boomers” the use of complementary and alternative therapies will increase dramatically<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Therapeutic Touch International Association, [www.therapeutic-touch.org](http://www.therapeutic-touch.org)

<sup>2</sup> The Therapeutic Touch Network of Ontario, <http://www.therapeutictouchontario.org/index.php/learn/research-at-a-glance/research-bibliographies>

<sup>3</sup> Definition of Hospice palliative Care, [http://www.chpca.net/media/7757/LTAHPC\\_Definition\\_of\\_HPC\\_from\\_the\\_Norms.pdf](http://www.chpca.net/media/7757/LTAHPC_Definition_of_HPC_from_the_Norms.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Canadian Virtual Hospice, [http://www.virtualhospice.ca/en\\_US/Main+Site+Navigation/Home/For+Professionals/For+Professionals/The+Exchange/Current/Therapeutic+Touch+in+a+Geriatric+Palliative+Care+Unit.aspx](http://www.virtualhospice.ca/en_US/Main+Site+Navigation/Home/For+Professionals/For+Professionals/The+Exchange/Current/Therapeutic+Touch+in+a+Geriatric+Palliative+Care+Unit.aspx)

<sup>5</sup> Giasson, M., & Bouchard, L. (1998). Effect of Therapeutic Touch on the well-being of persons with terminal cancer. *Journal of Holistic Nursing*, 16(3), 383-398.

<sup>6</sup> Marta, Ilda, Sueli Baldan, Ani Berton, Michele Pavam, Maria da Silva. “The effectiveness of Therapeutic Touch on pain, depression and sleep in patients with chronic pain: clinical trial” *Revista da Escola de Enfermagem da USP* (2010) 44(4): 1094-1102.

<sup>7</sup> Braun, C., Layton, J., & Braun, J. (1986). Therapeutic Touch improves residents' sleep. *American Health Care Association Journal*, 12(1), 48-49.

<sup>8</sup> Gerontological Nurses Association of British Columbia (Gnabc), [www.gnabc.com](http://www.gnabc.com)

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Therapeutic Touch is offered in many settings; hospitals, hospices, long term care facilities, shelters; correctional facilities and in the home. It is offered in urban, rural and isolated communities. There is no limitation.

Therapeutic Touch is responsive to the unique needs of the diverse cultural backgrounds inherent in our Canadian population. Therapeutic Touch can be offered to anyone who is open to improving their health and sense of well-being. It can be taught to anyone with compassion and an intention to help others.

Therapeutic Touch does not require a physician's order or special equipment. It is a complementary therapy particularly suited to the Therapeutic Touch Practitioner responding in the moment whenever a need is recognized.

Therapeutic Touch is within the scope of practice of many health care professionals. It is practiced by nurses, social workers, occupational therapists, home support workers, clergy, and physicians. Many lay people volunteer Therapeutic Touch services in health care settings, particularly in hospice. Therapeutic Touch is given with compassion and respect, both integral components of providing quality health care.

"Therapeutic Touch is most valuable with symptom management. After receiving Therapeutic Touch, terminally ill patients often need less narcotic analgesia to maintain the same level of pain control. Therapeutic Touch also seems to assist in settling the restlessness that besets patients who are close to death.

Therapeutic Touch helps to calm anxiety and alleviate fear in both patient and family. It also reduces stress levels and potential burnout in the practitioner. Therapeutic Touch facilitates a state of quiet connectedness between loved ones and caregivers alike, and can be a strong ally for everyone affected by the dying process.<sup>9</sup>"

The Quality End-of-Life Care Coalition of Canada (QELCCC) has worked to improve end of life care for all Canadians. Therapeutic Touch is a holistic approach addressing physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional issues. With greater access to training opportunities Therapeutic Touch can be accessible to professionals and volunteers who work with those in isolated communities and those that, in the past, have been marginalized, and have not received equal access to health care services. Therapeutic Touch can be used to complement and enrich other existing services and care. With adequately trained Therapeutic Touch practitioners, Canadians can move from one setting to another without a disruption of high quality service.

Effective, high quality end-of life care should be available to all regardless of their health condition. "Therapeutic Touch as a complementary healing modality integrates well anywhere along the continuum of palliative care whether a person is receiving palliative interventions such as chemotherapy

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<sup>9</sup> May, D. Therapeutic Touch™ in Palliative Care: Comfort for the Patient "Beyond Cure". *The Use of Therapeutic Touch in Hospice and Palliative Care*. Etobicoke, Ontario: The Therapeutic Touch Network of Ontario, 2008.

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or radiation to help manage symptoms or is truly in the last moments of life. It helps address issues physical, psychological, social and spiritual in nature as the person heals and hopes for a good death through their palliation.<sup>10</sup>

Family members and caregivers also benefit from receiving Therapeutic Touch as they take the time to have their own needs addressed. Family can be trained to do Therapeutic Touch. Being able to offer Therapeutic Touch at a time when other treatments and interventions are no longer effective is very empowering for the family members, giving them a meaningful way to continue to care for their loved one.

“Therapeutic Touch both quiets the practitioner and the patient and makes them more aware of each other’s feelings. It fosters communication and comforts the dying with another human presence. Even more significantly, when a trained practitioner conveys a sense of peace to the dying person the person experiences relief of anxiety, some relief of pain, and often dies more peacefully. The practitioner, as well, is often profoundly affected by assisting the dying process.<sup>11</sup>” Practitioners report an increased sense of calmness and well-being themselves. In our busy, high stress work places the use of Therapeutic Touch has the potential for increasing job satisfaction and minimizing burnout.

Attached are two endorsements from hospice associations that wanted to share the value of Therapeutic Touch.

### **Summary**

Therapeutic Touch in health care, specifically in Quality End-of-Life-Care, can be used to innovate and provide high quality, low cost, sustainable health care to Canadians regardless of location. Patients, family members, caregivers, and health care professionals all benefit from Therapeutic Touch. Therapeutic Touch is patient centered as is Hospice Palliative Care and can be provided by any member of the trans-disciplinary team optimizing access and providing increased flexibility for the patient and the health care team.

### **Recommendations**

1. • Provide health care professionals and volunteers with information, training, and support in the use of Therapeutic Touch. This should be included in the curriculum of their various professions as well as training for those that are already in the field.

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<sup>10</sup> Hall, Nancy *Therapeutic Touch™ in Palliative Care. “. The Use of Therapeutic Touch in Hospice and Palliative Care.* Etobicoke, Ontario: The Therapeutic Touch Network of Ontario, 2008.

<sup>11</sup> Wager, Susan. *A Doctor’s Guide to Therapeutic Touch: Enhancing the Body’s Energy to Promote Healing.* New York, New York: Pedigree Books, 1996.

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2. • Ensure the patient and their family are at the center of care with all members of the trans-disciplinary team being aware of the benefits of Therapeutic Touch and how to access Therapeutic Touch resources.
3. • Provide patients and families with written information describing the use of Therapeutic Touch so they can make informed choices in their end of life care.
4. • Provide Therapeutic Touch services as an easily accessible health care choice at end of life, for all Canadians.
5. • Support a process for the recognition of Therapeutic Touch as an integrative therapy.

The Therapeutic Touch Networks of Canada are committed to assisting in developing strategies in education and implementation of Therapeutic Touch in all areas of Canada, allowing for equal access to quality end of life care. For more information on Therapeutic Touch in Canada please refer to the Therapeutic Touch Networks of Canada website: [www.ttncc.ca](http://www.ttncc.ca).