The Science of Energy Therapies and Contemplative Practice
A Conceptual Review and the Application of Zero Balancing

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The topic of energy therapies is prompted by the increasing attention of healthcare practitioners and consumers to Eastern philosophies and ancient healing practices. This article includes a conceptual framework of quantum physics principles providing the basis of interpretation of energetic phenomena, along with the exploration of theoretical concepts involving energy as a communicational network. An overview of the contemplative tradition of meditation indicates its necessity as a requisite element of energy therapies, the practice combining a knowledge base of the core scientific precepts with the experience of restorative strategies. The relevance of energy therapies as a path to self-transcendence along with the application of a specific touch technique, Zero Balancing, is highlighted. KEY WORDS: energy medicine, energy psychology, entrainment, mindfulness-based stress reduction, psychoneuroimmunology, putative energy fields, quantum physics, self-transcendence, stress, transcendental meditation, Zero Balancing Holist Nurs Pract 2009;23(6):315–334

Our traditional medical model designed to address diseases once manifested, rather than to promote optimal health and prevent reoccurrence, delivers treatment more relevant to acute illnesses than chronic. Amazingly, the US healthcare industry spends $1.6 trillion annually, and yet, we rank 12th out of 13 industrialized countries in 16 major indicators. Americans spend more than $5000 per person each year and are 27th in life expectancy; Cuba, at 28th, spends $186.1 Dissatisfaction with the American healthcare system, as well as interest prompted by Eastern philosophies and ancient healing practices reintroduced into Western culture, has brought about the key paradigm shift toward holistic medicine in the United States.

Ironically, a contributing factor is medical progress itself: As people live longer, they develop many stress-related diseases, such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, Alzheimer disease, and cancer. Stress in our lives tends to be viewed as a detriment, but in actuality it really implies any necessary adaptation, even one regarded as beneficial. It can, however, lead to “distress,” as repetitive or overt demands cause a cascade of sympathetic nervous system responses.2 In 1926, Hans Selye was one of the first scientists to consider the harmful physiologic response to stress and distress on health, theorizing potentially harmful effects on one’s ability to handle and adjust to the demands of injury and disease.3 The deleterious impact of stress continues to influence, and today, it has become widespread. In fact, as many as 90% of visits to primary care providers are for stress-related symptoms.4 Work-related stress, the leading source of stress for adults, appears to be increasingly problematic. Swedish and American researchers report a 500% increase in colorectal cancer for those with job-related stressors that span a 10-year period, noting that occupational issues, intrinsically more chronic in nature, demonstrate a greater long-term effect than a more dramatic emotional occurrence, such as death of a spouse or child.5 Researchers, considering animal