



Spiritist “Passe” (Spiritual Healing), Health Outcomes and its Clinical Applicability



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Abstract

Biofield therapies, such as the laying on of hands by Spiritist healers together with the Spirits, defined as the Spiritist “passe”, have been widely used in several clinical situations. The study aimed to identify clinical characteristics, methodology and effects on the health of patients exposed to the “passe”. A total of 73 clinical cases were included, and clinical characteristics, application methods and health effects were assessed, with non-health-related outcomes being excluded. Regarding the indications for administration of the Spiritist “passe”, it was observed that most cases (49.3%) were physical dysfunctions and diseases, followed by emotional and mental imbalances (19.2%), obsession /possession (13.7%) and mental and physical dysfunctions (11.0%). The knowledge of the applicability and effects of the laying on of hands by the Spiritist “passe” provides information to physicians and health professionals so they can decide whether a patient will benefit or not from this therapy, as well as to future researchers, since this is an open field for future studies.

Keywords: Complementary therapies; Laying on of hands; Spiritual healing; Energy therapies

Introduction

Biofield therapy modalities, conceived as forms of treatment that affect the energy fields that supposedly surround and interpenetrate the human body [1], have been used in several clinical situations aiming at promoting health, muscle relaxation and well-being [2,3]. The use of integrative and complementary therapies has increased in several countries [4,5]. In a review that evaluated the contribution of biofield therapies with no physical contact to health promotion, the authors identified in most studies at least one statistically significant primary beneficial result [3]. Among the types of biofield therapies are the Reiki energy therapies, Therapeutic Touch, the Spiritist “passe”, among others. In Spiritism, the laying on of hands is known as the Spiritist “passe”, defined as a transference of psychic energies that alters the cell field [6], resulting in a combination of fluids and energies derived from the individual providing the “passe”, Enlightened Spirits or the union of both [7,8]. This connection between the individual providing the “passe”, the Spiritist healers and the spiritual dimension is what differentiates the Spiritist “passe” from other biofield therapies. This therapy has been widely used in Brazil.

Lucchetti et al. [9] assessed bacterial growth in cultures submitted to four groups (laying on of hands with no intention to cure and with the intention of inhibiting bacterial growth, Spiritist “passe” and without the laying on of hands). Inhibition of bacterial growth was observed only in the “passe” group after 48h and 7days. Recently, three randomized clinical trials evaluated the effects of this biofield therapy. Cavalcante et al. [10], evaluated the effects of the “passe” therapy on individuals with anxiety and observed a greater reduction in anxiety and quality of life improvement in volunteers exposed to this intervention in 8 weeks, when compared to the laying on of hands by individuals who were not healers, without the spiritual presence. In two studies including hospitalized patients, Carneiro et al. [11,12] found a significant decrease in anxiety scores and muscle tension perception, as well as an increase in well-being after three daily sessions of Spiritist “passes” when compared to the laying on of hands by volunteers, without the spiritual presence, and without the laying on of hands. Considering the scarcity of articles evaluating this type of energy therapy, its intense use as a clinical therapy and an alternative and

complementary resource, we decided to perform this study. The aim was to identify the causes and indications, application methods and effects of the Spiritist “passe” in patient case reports.

Methods

Participants

The present study consists in the review of the clinical cases of patients after being submitted to Spiritist “passe” therapy. Thirteen publications we used for this review (Life in the Spiritual World) considered reference in the application of “passe” according to the Spiritism of André Luiz/Xavier [7], based on reported cases about the application of this type of energy therapy. The books used in the review were: “Nosso lar”, “Os mensageiros”, “Missionários da luz”, “Obreiros da vida eterna”, “Ação e reação”, “No mundo maior”, “Nos domínios da mediunidade”, “Entre a terra e o céu”, “Libertação”, “Sexo e destino”, “Mecanismos da mediunidade”, “Evolução em dois mundos” and “E a vida continua”. The inclusion criteria comprised the reported clinical cases of patients who received magnetic energy “passe” therapy (is the laying on of hands by humans), spiritual therapy (applied by Spirits) and the Spiritist “passe” (is the laying on of hands by humans connected with a spiritual dimension). Exclusion criteria were the reported cases of patients who did not meet at least one of the variables (cause, indication, technique, site or outcome) and with non-health-related outcomes.

Measures

Readings and literature searches were performed, and the indications were recorded as: mental imbalances or disorders [imbalances related to the central nervous system such as schizophrenia, psychoses, paranoid; mood and anxiety disorders; dysfunctions with emotional predominance, classified as psychosomatic (emotional disorders or feelings such as anger, anxiety, anguish, fear or desire for revenge, as these mental states are capable of interfering with the body’s metabolism and dynamics, producing symptoms or even influencing the onset and worsening of diseases) and behavioral disorders (these are the actions of individuals with explosive behaviors, who cannot refrain their impulses, expressed as irritable reactions, rebelliousness, cursing, among others) [13], physical dysfunctions (body function abnormalities), both (mental imbalances or dysfunctions and physical disorders), obsession/possession (obsession is the persistent action or dominance that some Spirits manage to acquire over certain individuals [14], possession is a disorder characterized by a transient loss of consciousness of one’s own identity, associated with perfect maintenance of environmental consciousness, as referred to in the International Classification of Diseases as ICD F 44.3-Trance and Possession States); methods used during the technique application (laying on of hands: the Spiritist healers stand in front of or next to the patient and lay on their hands above the head or on the physical body, longitudinally: the healers move their hands longitudinally, starting at the top of the patient’s head and descending slowly along the body; and the rotational technique: the Spiritist healers perform circular movements with their hands over the patient’s body); time of

application (few minutes: total time less than 14 minutes and long period: equal to or greater than 15 minutes); health outcomes (mental health: reduction of anxiety, global stress and negative emotions and feelings such as irritation, nervousness, anger and elevated well-being, among others; on physical health: reducing pain, inflammatory and infectious diseases, stimulating uterine contractions during childbirth, renewal of organic energies, physical strengthening, improving blood circulation and functioning of cells and organs, organic rebalancing and removal of energy harmful to health which can generate bioenergetic disturbances) and, finally, the references.

We chose to aggregate the most frequently reported effects on mental and physical health into a single group, considering the small proportion of events in each one and that, in most cases, the patients reported effects on mental health, which resulted in improved organ and physical system functions, in addition to the lack of a specific standardization, plus another group of removal of energy harmful to health.

Data analysis

Data were analyzed statistically using descriptive statistics. Categorical variables were recategorized as dichotomous by gender (male and female), indications (mental imbalances and physical dysfunctions), time of application (few minutes and long period), health outcomes (mental and physical health and energycleansing) and analyzed using the Chi-square test or Fisher’s exact. Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS for Windows 7. Differences were considered statistically significant when $p < 0.05$.

Results

We estimate that our review included most of the clinical cases. However, when the same patient received two interventions with Spiritist “passe” application technique or different effects, it was included as two cases. One hundred and three reported clinical cases were identified: 7 reports in “Nosso lar”, 2 in “Os mensageiros”, 7 in “Missionários da luz”, 18 in “Obreiros da vida eterna”, 12 in “No mundo maior”, 22 in “Nos Domínios da Mediunidade”, 7 in “Ação e reação”, 6 in “Sexo e destino”, 11 in “Libertação”, 9 in “Entre a terra e o céu” and only 2 in “E a Vida Continua”. No clinical cases of exposure to the Spiritist “passe” were found in “Mecanismos da mediunidade” and “Evolução em dois mundos”. Thirty cases were excluded. Most of the reports did not include the patients’ age, but only the age range, ranging from child to elderly. In most cases (87.7%), a spiritual “passe” (laying on of hands without a Spiritist healers) was described, followed by a Spiritist “passe” (laying on of hands by Spiritist healers with a spiritual context). However, there were no differences regarding the technique ($p = 0.648$) and the reported effects ($p = 0.570$) among the types of application of this therapy.

As for the causes, most (46.6%) were related to emotional imbalances, such as negative thoughts and emotions such as sorrow, anger, heartache, nervousness, anguish, anxiety, irritation, suicidal thoughts, among others, followed by physical dysfunctions, (27.4%), obsession/possession (15.1%), and finally, mental

and physical dysfunctions (8.2%). Regarding the indications for administration of the Spiritist “passe”, of the total reported, it was observed that most cases (52.9%) were physical dysfunctions and diseases, followed by mental imbalances or disorders (20.6%), obsession/possession (14.7%) and mental and physical dysfunctions (11.8%). Three techniques were identified for the energy therapy administration: the laying on of hands (LOH) on the head, diseased organ or both sites; Longitudinal, consisting in the laying on of hands by moving them longitudinally, starting at the top of the patient’s head and slowly descending along the body; the rotational technique, reported in only one clinical case with the purpose of gathering the deleterious energies to health in order to remove them.

Table 1: Clinical characteristics of the study participants, methods of application and effects of the Spiritist “passe” (n=73).

Variables	n	%
Gender		
M	32	43.8
F	31	42.5
M and F	10	13.7
Indications		
Physical dysfunctions	36	49.3
Emotional and mental imbalances	14	19.2
Emotional and Mental imbalances and physical dysfunctions	8	11
Obsession/possession	10	13.7
Unknown	5	6.8
Technique		
LOH	19	26
Longitudinal	2	2.7
Both (LOH and Longitudinal)	3	4.1
Both (LOH and Rotational)	1	1.4
Unknown	48	65.8
LOH		
Head	7	9.6
Diseased organ	10	13.7
Head and diseased organ	7	9.6
Other technique or unknown	49	67.1
Duration		
Few minutes	9	12.3
Long (15 minutes to about 4 hours)	6	8.2
Short time and then long time	1	1.4
Unknown	57	79.2
Effects		
A(mental health and physical health)	55	75.3
B(removal of energies harmful to health)	8	11
Both (A and B)	2	2.7
Unknown	8	11

M: Male; F: Female; LOH, laying on of hands, localized.

Regarding the velocity of the therapeutic “passe” administration using the longitudinal technique, no reports were found describing the use of the fast type. Most of the clinical cases (79.2%) did not show a description of the duration of the complementary therapy application. Of the total with references, 56.3% were reported as lasting “some minutes” or “few minutes”. However, in cases of more severe diseases, the reported duration ranged from 10 minutes to 4 hours or reports of “a long time” (Table 1). When we analyzed the techniques employed during the administration of this type of therapy and the effects reported in the analyzed clinical cases, we found a significant association (p=0.016) between the localized “laying on of hands” technique and its effects on the subject’s mental and physical health (Table 2). When analyzing the reported causes, association was observed between patients with mental and emotional imbalances and physical dysfunction indications (p=0.000). This result demonstrates that unbalanced thoughts and emotions can cause physical illness. No adverse effects were reported with the application of the Spiritist “passe” therapy in the clinical cases of the researched literature.

Table 2: Clinical characteristics of study participants, methods and effects according to Spiritist “passe” application techniques.

Variables	Spiritist “Passe” Techniques		
	LOH	Longitudinal	p
Gender n(%)			
M	10(83.3)	2(16.7)	0.347
F	8(100.0)	0 (0.0)	
Indications n(%)			
Mental imbalances	3(100.0)	0(0.0)	0.65
Physical disorders	11(84.6)	2(15.4)	
Duration n(%)			
Few minutes	3(60.0)	2(40.0)	0.357
Long (>15 minutes)	3(100.0)	0(0.0)	
Effects n(%)			
Improvement in mental and physical health	17(100.0)	0(0.0)	0.016*
Removal of energies harmful to health	1(33.3)	2(66.7)	

M: Male; F: Female; LOH, laying on of hands, localized Fisher’s Exact Test* Significance set at: p<0.05.

Discussion

According to the findings of the present study, one can infer that the laying on of hands by the Spiritist “passe” is indicated in mental imbalances and disorders, physical dysfunctions and diseases, and to obsession/possession cases by means of localized laying on of hands, longitudinal and rotational techniques. The technique of localized laying on of hands is associated with improved mental and physical health, while the longitudinal technique removes energies that are harmful to the individual’s health, stemming from unbalanced thoughts and negative emotions. Regarding the clinical characteristics, the individuals who received the energy therapy through the Spiritist “passe” did not belong to a specific gender or age range. Studies evaluating this biofield therapy included

populations of different age groups, from infants to the elderly [10-12,15], showing promising results, such as improved immunity (increased lymphocytes), reduced anxiety [10-12,16] and muscle tension, and increased well-being [11,12].

In this study, disharmonious thoughts and persistent negative emotions can generate bioenergetic disturbances and physical illnesses. In a review [17] about the influence of emotions on the body, the authors report that there is a deep association between emotional, cognitive and homeostatic processes through the brain areas involved in motivational control, cognition and memory that connect to several nervous circuits, which, through their neurotransmitters, promote physiological responses that connect the body to the environment (somatic nervous system) and also through the innervations of visceral structures (visceral nervous system or vegetative life), which are important in homeostasis maintenance. Moreover, emotions are usually associated with autonomic, endocrine, skeletal motor [18-21] and immune system responses [22]. Regarding the Spiritist “passe” administration methodology, the techniques used were “the localized laying on of hands”, “longitudinal” and “rotational”. The time of application of the “longitudinal” technique was only a few minutes and in the localized one, it varied between a few minutes and approximately 4 hours, according to the severity of the patient’s clinical picture.

As for the longitudinal technique, the application was performed

slowly, exclusively. Lucchetti et al. [9] verified the inhibition of bacterial growth after 48h and 7 days only in the group that received “passe” with laying on of hands for 10 minutes. In the studies by Carneiro et al. [11,12], the longitudinal technique was applied for 5 minutes and the laying on of hands for 5 minutes in hospitalized patients, whereas Cavalcante et al. [10], used the longitudinal technique during a 5 minute period in volunteers with anxiety. There was no physical contact between the individual receiving the “passe” and the one administering it in any of the studies, and the distance between the hands of the Spiritist healers and the patient’s body was the same (10-15cm). According to the literature, the Spiritist “passe” applied at a short distance [7] and with no physical contact [6] has the capacity to penetrate the patient’s energetic field (biofield), resulting in immediate changes in the individual’s body [7]. The application of this therapy through the localized laying on of hands is associated with effects on mental and physical health. As for the longitudinal technique, it is associated with the removal of energies in the biofield that are harmful to the individual’s health. Bioenergetic disturbances may manifest in the form of diseases in the physical organism [23]. Corroborating these findings, studies that applied the “passe” therapy using the longitudinal technique and the localized laying on of hands have been shown to reduce anxiety [10-12] and muscle tension [11,12], in addition to improving well-being and quality of life in the areas of physical and environmental health [10].

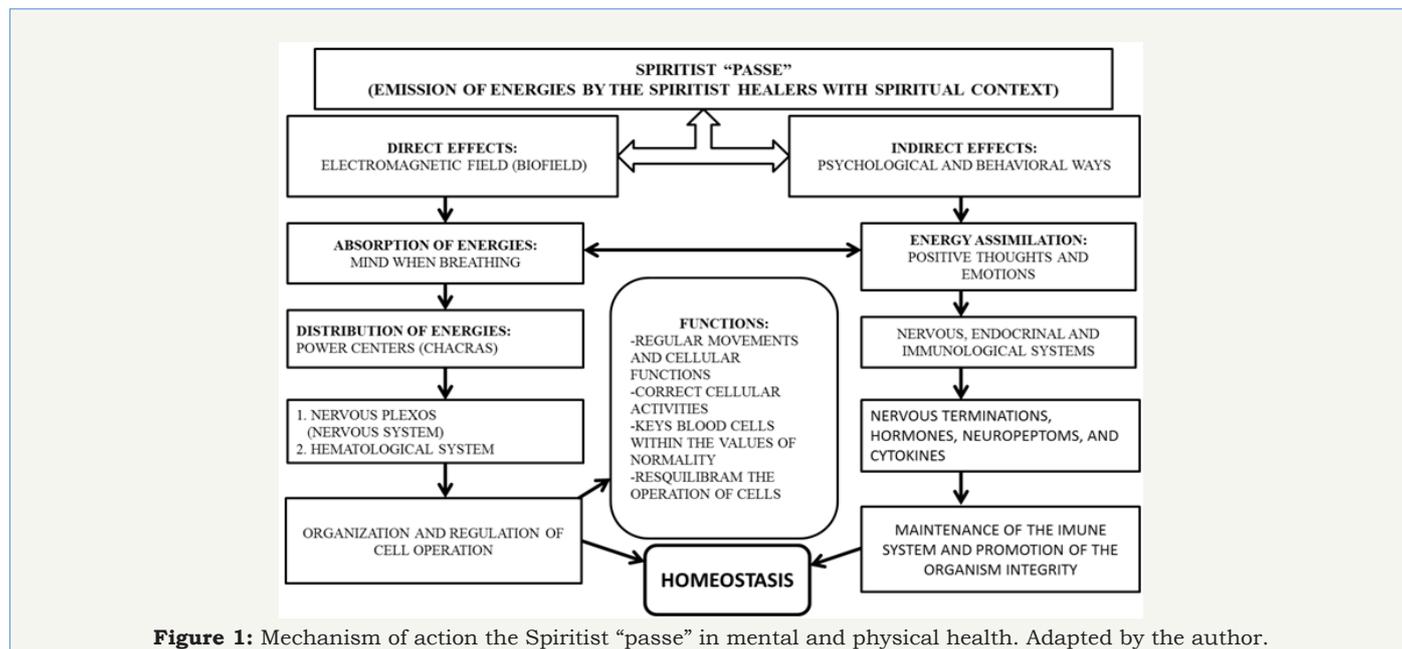


Figure 1: Mechanism of action the Spiritist “passe” in mental and physical health. Adapted by the author.

Furthermore, a recent study evaluating whether spiritual healing could support breast cancer patients regarding the long-term side effects of hormone therapy, the authors reported relief from the physical side effects of the treatment, increased energy levels, increased well-being, emotional relaxation, and return to activities before the disease onset [24]. No adverse effects were verified with the application of this energy therapy in the investigated literature and studies [10-12]. The laying on of hands by the Spiritist “passe”, as a type of integrative and complementary

therapy, which is applicable without any contraindication, is always a valuable resource in the treatment of patients of all ages [25]. Bioenergy therapy by laying on of hands with spiritual context (Spiritist “passe”) can provide direct and indirect benefits on mental and physical health. As direct effects, through the absorption of energies by the force centers (chacras), during the breathing, that will be retained in the blood regulating the cellular movements and functions, correcting their activities, keeping them the manifestations within desirable norms, thus favoring, restoring

equilibrium in the functioning of cells, consequently generating homeostasis of the physical body [25]. In addition, vital energy increases the effectiveness of the immune system, the connection with the nervous system (integrated with endocrine and immune systems), stimulating the manufacture of greater and facilitates the fight against pathogenic processes, reducing or destroying them completely [26].

Indirectly, the benefits will be through the intermediary psychological and behavioral pathways. The patient's collaboration in the assimilation of the energies emanated by the passer by means of optimistic thoughts, health and healing and positive emotions help to neutralize the negative emotions. The mechanism can be explained throughout Spiritist "passe" applications that can increase the frequency of positive emotions and reduce the likelihood that stress will result in emotional disorders such as anxiety disorder, depression, suicide and substance abuse [26]. In addition, according to the psychoneuroimmuno-endocrinology that explains the interaction between the mind, the emotions and the neurological, neuroendocrine and immunological systems, which could constitute an access to internal, natural mechanisms and trigger both pathological and healing processes [27]. Communication between the various (CRF), the secretion of which can be stimulated by thoughts, emotions or immunological activations that influence the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis and its phenomena, a fact evidenced by Selye [28] (Figure 1). According to Kardek, the energy emanating from the Spiritist healers is potentialized by the action of the good Spirits which is the main characteristic of this therapeutic intervention.

The limitations of the present study include, first, the fact that our sample consisted of descriptions of the author of reports of clinical cases where the "passe" was applied, and there may be inferences. Second, the outcomes on mental and physical health were grouped in the same category, due to reports of both effects in most patients, although there is no effect pattern; this fact makes it impossible to define which specific effect can be provided to each patient according to the indications. The possible directions for the studies evaluating the intervention of the Spiritist "passe" are broad and extensive, especially considering that it is widely used in several countries, mainly in Brazil. Considering this technique is used by the population and of its interest in the scientific area, there is a vast opportunity to systematically study its effects, as well as its physiological mechanisms.

Conclusion

The knowledge of the applicability and effects of the laying on of hands by the Spiritist "passe" provides information to physicians and health professionals, so they can decide whether a patient will benefit or not from this type of therapy, as well as to future researchers, since this is an open field for future studies.

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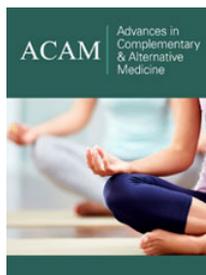
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