Research is essential to the growth of knowledge. To advance knowledge of Therapeutic Touch®, The Therapeutic Touch Network of Ontario (TTNO) wishes to offer financial assistance to its members who are interested in conducting either qualitative or quantitative research on the outcomes of Therapeutic Touch on humans with various conditions and illnesses.

KNOWLEDGE OF PRIOR RESEARCH
As you consider engaging in Therapeutic Touch research, it is useful to be aware of what has been accomplished to date. The TTNO has published two excellent resources to help you in your search for prior research. The Annotated Bibliography Published Therapeutic Touch™ Research 1975 to July 2004, compiled by Theresa Moore, RN, MScN, may be downloaded from the TTNO website at therapeutictouchontario.com.

More recent research has been compiled by Mei fei Elrick, PhD, in the Annotated Bibliography Published Therapeutic Touch® Research 2005 to 2012. This is available as a download from the website on the Research Guidelines page. Donations to the TTNO would be greatly appreciated to support our Research Fund and the ongoing work of keeping this annotated bibliography current and available to all. Donations may be sent to The TTNO, 2nd floor, 4-290 The West Mall, Etobicoke, ON M9C 1C6.

LETTER OF INTENT
To be eligible for funding, your Letter of Intent must be received by January 31 of the year in which you wish to receive funding.

Include in your Letter of Intent responses to the following questions:
1. What is your research question? What prompted you to ask that question?
2. What is your research plan? Who will be involved?
3. What methodology will you be using? Include in your response the reason or reasons you decided to use this particular methodology.
4. How will you analyze your data?
5. If you are replicating a study, which study or studies are you replicating? If replicating, how are you incorporating suggestions offered by P. Winstead-Fry PhD, and J. Kijek (see Suggestions for Conducting Research below)
6. In what refereed journals are you thinking of submitting your research for publication?
7. What funding are you requesting? Please indicate how you would allocate these funds.
8. What research experience have you and/or your team had?

If you have questions about preparing your Letter of Intent, you may contact the Research Chair either by mail at The TTNO, attn. Research Chair, The TTNO, 2nd floor, 4-290 The West Mall, Etobicoke, ON M9C 1C6 or by email at ttno.membership@bellnet.ca

SUGGESTIONS FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH
The TTNO is interested in funding research that meets general research standards. The TTNO also is interested in funding Therapeutic Touch research that incorporates suggestions found in Winstead-Fry, P. and Kijek, Jean. “An Integrative Review and Meta-Analysis of Therapeutic Touch Research.” Alternative Therapies in Health and Medicine 5.6 (1999): 58-67. The authors make the following suggestions:

1. The people who are designing and implementing the research neither offer the Therapeutic Touch sessions nor make observations of participants. This suggestion is important, because those most involved in the research design might inadvertently influence the results.

2. Use Therapeutic Touch as developed and taught by Dolores Krieger, PhD, RN, and Dora Kunz. The session, then, will not be bound by a specific time limit. Rather, it will be based on assessment and re-assessment. In the next section, Other Considerations when Conducting Therapeutic Touch Research, the use of Therapeutic Touch as developed and taught by Dolores Krieger, PhD, RN, and Dora Kunz is discussed more fully.
3. Conduct research on the outcomes of Therapeutic Touch on humans with various illnesses and conditions rather than on those who are healthy.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS WHEN CONDUCTING THERAPEUTIC TOUCH RESEARCH

Controlling Variables
In research, anything that can vary is called a variable. For example, gender is a variable, as well as age, height, weight, education, or income. In research, it is useful to “control” as many variables as possible. Below are some examples of variables in Therapeutic Touch research.

1. Practitioners
Recruit practitioners who are similar. To control for gender, recruit only men or only women practitioners. Other variables include the number of years the practitioners have been offering Therapeutic Touch. Decide on how many years of offering Therapeutic Touch is appropriate for your study, then find practitioners who meet that requirement. Decide whether those offering Therapeutic Touch would all be RNs (active or retired) or all lay practitioners.

2. The Therapeutic Touch Session
Decide how the session will be offered, e.g., will it be offered without touch or will the participants be asked, if they agree, to have their shoulders, hands or feet touched? Decide how will you end the session? Where will the participant rest after the session? Will someone stay with the research participant? If so, who? When these guidelines are established, each practitioner will be able to offer a session that adheres as closely as possible to the study's guidelines. Being specific about the session also enables those reading the results of the study to know how sessions were offered and how they might be reproduced in the event another researcher wishes to replicate the study.

3. The Control Group
In research, there is often a “control” group. Those in the control group are as similar as possible to those in the “treatment” group. For example, in the studies conducted on the efficacy of a new drug, there is the “treatment” group that is given the drug and the “control” group that is given a placebo. In research on Therapeutic Touch, the placebo has often been a “sham” treatment. In those studies using “sham” or placebo Therapeutic Touch, the people offering “sham” Therapeutic Touch were instructed not to give Therapeutic Touch (They were often not Therapeutic Touch practitioners.) but to move their hands over the individual. Sometimes those offering the placebo or “sham” Therapeutic Touch were asked to count backwards to make it difficult to think about the person over whom they were moving their hands.

4. Sham Therapeutic Touch
There are problems with using “sham” or placebo Therapeutic Touch in research. To minimize any problems, it is essential that those offering the sham/placebo have no knowledge of Therapeutic Touch, including knowledge gained by having received Therapeutic Touch. Indeed, it is important that those offering “sham” or placebo Therapeutic Touch have no knowledge of any modality where intent is important. In a recent study on Bone Marrow Transplant (see Winter 2005 inTouch), the researchers circumvented the pitfalls of “sham” or placebo Therapeutic Touch by using, as the control condition, a “friendly visit.” In the study, Therapeutic Touch was more efficacious than a “friendly visit.”


The Therapeutic Touch Network of Ontario thanks Patricia Winstead-Fry, PhD, for her assistance in developing these research guidelines.

November 2014