Author's response to reviews

Title: Time-lapse analysis of potential cellular responsiveness to Johrei, a Japanese healing technique

Authors:

Ryan Taft (taftrd@sutterhealth.org)
Dan Moore (moore@cooper.cpmc.org)
Garret Yount (yountg@sutterhealth.org)

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Editors:

I appreciate the opportunity to revise the manuscript “Time-lapse analysis of potential cellular responsiveness to Johrei, a Japanese healing technique” according to the helpful criticisms provided through the review process. I have revised the manuscript to incorporate all of the suggestions by both the editors and the reviewer.

The editors provided four points to address. These points are paraphrased below in italics followed by a description of the revisions made to the manuscript to address these points.

1) **Reword the conclusions part of the abstract.**

   The conclusions part of the Abstract in the revised manuscript no longer includes the suggestion that the methodology is inappropriate for evaluating the healing practice. It now reads: “Cell death and proliferation rates of cultured human cancer cells do not appear responsive to Johrei treatment from a short distance.”

2) **Explain the situation with the other manuscript referred to that appears to be a precursor to this one.**

   We acknowledge the inappropriateness of referring to the other unpublished study because, rather than being a precursor, it was a separate study conducted at a different institution with different practitioners and different outcome measures. All mention of the as yet unpublished manuscript is eliminated in the revised manuscript.

3) **Make reference to previous article published in BMC.**

   The revised manuscript includes in the Discussion section a reference to our previous article published in BMC. It is as follows: “The failure to observe evidence of a reproducible cellular response to Johrei treatment is consistent with prior studies in our laboratory evaluating another popular energy medicine modality, external Qigong. Like Johrei, practitioners of external Qigong generally claim the ability to emit or direct healing energy to treat patients. Qigong practices originate from China and are based on the manipulation of a purported healing energy called “Qi.” Our prior study investigated the ability of experienced Qigong practitioners to enhance the growth of normal human brain cells in
culture as measured by a colony-forming efficiency assay. Following a rigorously designed protocol with randomization, blinding and controls for variability, we did not observe reproducible effects of external Qigong treatment on the growth of these cells (Yount G et al: In vitro test of external Qigong. BMC Complement Altern Med 2004, 4(1):5.).

4) Consider modifying competing interests statement.

The competing interests section of the revised manuscript has been changed to acknowledge financial support from the Center for the Science of Life, a Johrei organizational body.

The reviewer had four specific comments. The comments are paraphrased below in italics followed by a description of the revisions made to the manuscript to address these concerns.

1) The conclusions (p11) are somewhat swinging on the basis of the study reported.

The conclusions (both on page 11 and in the Abstract) have been reigned in and now are limited to the scope of the experimental work. As described above, the conclusion now reads: “Cell death and proliferation rates of cultured human cancer cells do not appear responsive to Johrei treatment from a short distance.”

2) The unusual duration of Johrei treatment should be commented on.

The Methods section of the revised manuscript points out the unusual duration of Johrei treatment. It reads: “This exceptionally long treatment period (4 hours) was chosen as the highest ‘dose’ that was practical within the experimental model.”

3) A report of a successful experiment by Gomes et al should be acknowledged.

The revised manuscript acknowledges the paper by Gomes et al. as follows: “An in vitro study revealed an apparent influence of Johrei treatment on the germination rate of irradiated seeds, however the study did not follow standard scientific methods.” We include the qualification regarding methods of Gomes et al. because of the following concerns:

- No power analysis based on irradiated vs. non-irradiated data is described and the total number of experiments accomplished is not defined.
- There is a question of whether the seed storage was controlled since the authors state: “a temporal correlation indicating a seasonal behavior of the
system is observed, probably due to uncontrolled environmental variations (humidity, seed storage, etc.)."

- The time intervals at which seed counting was done are not completely defined.
- Rationale for selective analyses is unclear as described on page 11: "As the main purpose is to avoid spurious significance, this analysis was done exclusively for the samples that presented statistical significance."
- Data which they suggest is positive is statistically insignificant, and selective analysis is employed (page 9-10): "...15 out of 127 showed a difference...3 of these present negative germination differences...the remaining twelve show positive germination differences [and were analyzed]."
- No explanation is provided as to why their previous unpublished results show that Johrei did not affect irradiated seeds when treated prior to irradiation or up to four hours after, but the published results show an effect when treated 24 hours after irradiation (page 13). All the data should be provided for comparison.

4) The studies of Laidlaw and Naito are not referred to in the conclusion where they are germane to the rather sweeping conclusions.

        The Discussion and Conclusions of the revised manuscript have been changed to eliminate the sweeping conclusions entirely. The new sections refer only to the in vitro studies. As such, we have not mentioned the in vivo studies of Laidlaw and Naito in these sections (but have maintained the reference to these studies in the Introduction).

Other minor changes have been made to the revised manuscript to improve clarity. Additionally, the sentence: “The practitioners followed a defined set of mental procedures to minimize variability in mental states between experiments.” has been added to the Methods section of the Abstract.

I hope these revisions are satisfactory.

Sincerely,

Garret Yount, Ph.D.
Scientist, Research Institute
California Pacific Medical Center
415.600.1783