

A Randomized Clinical Intervention Study of the Effect of Prayer on Subjects with Depression and Anxiety

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This study examines the effect of prayer on patients with mild to moderate depression and anxiety compared to similar patients not receiving prayer intervention. While clients are in this study they are asked to have no other prayer, psychotherapy, or counseling interventions. Whatever medications they are on when they enter the study remain the same throughout the duration of the study.

Clients are asked to complete a series of administered rating scales to measure depression and anxiety (Hamilton D & A). Mood and spiritual dispositional scales are also administered (Life Orientation Test & Daily Spiritual Experiences). They are given sample tubes to take home and collect salivary samples for cortisol measurements at 8AM, noon, 5PM, and 9PM.

Clients are computer randomized into a prayer intervention group and a control group. There are a series of six weekly prayer intervention sessions, the first one lasting 90 minutes and the others 60 minutes each. When the prayer sessions are completed, they are asked to again complete the administered scales and to collect the four saliva samples for analysis.

After the six prayer intervention sessions, they have no prayer intervention during the following month (and also no other counseling or psychotherapy, and no changes in medication). At the end of that month they are asked to once again complete the rating scales and collect four saliva samples as before. After 12 to 16 months rating scales are once again administered and salivary cortisol levels measured. They are asked whether during the ensuing period of time they received counseling, psychotherapy, additional prayers, or changes in medication and/or dosage.

The control group receives no prayer intervention for a period of six weeks. After which they again complete the administered rating scales and collect four salivary samples as before. They are then eligible to receive prayers and follow up as the previous group.

We have presently completed the final enrollment for the study and are in the process of inputting our data for analysis and evaluation. Our data will be available for the June meeting. The results are very positive and we believe prayer intervention will open the door to a therapeutic modality that is cost effective and lacking in side effects for many individuals with mild to moderate depression and anxiety.