William Bengston and Energy Healing

William Bengston (1950–2025) was an American sociology professor, author and practitioner of 'energy healing'. Bengston's writings contain numerous anecdotal descriptions of healings of cancer and other serious diseases, and also of successful laboratory experiments with mice.

Life, Career and Organizational Work

William Bengston was born in New York City in 1950 and received his PhD in sociology from Fordham University in New York in 1980. Prior to his death he divided his time between serving as a professor of sociology at St. Joseph's College in New York and work related to energy healing.

As a teenager, Bengston said, he was 'open-minded to psychic phenomena in principle, but intensely skeptical of those claiming to produce it'.1 He experienced a number of dreams around death that proved 'startlingly prophetic', which prompted him to start reading the literature of paranormal research. He was impressed by the results of laboratory ESP experiments conducted with strict protocols.

Aged 21, having gained his baccalaureate, Bengston met Bennett Mayrick, who claimed to be psychic, having accidentally discovered a gift for psychometry only months earlier. Bengston was sceptical, but was persuaded when Mayrick gave him an accurate reading. The two became friends, and explored psychic phenomena together, Mayrick performing regular readings while Bengston was taking his masters in sociology. This friendship would prove crucial to Bengston's journey into energy healing.

Bengston joined the Society for Scientific Exploration in 1999 and was a member for the rest of his life, ultimately serving as president emeritus.

He died peacefully on 16 April 2025, surrounded by his family.

Testing Mayrick

Bengston was keen for Mayrick to submit to testing. Mayrick considered the exercise pointless, since it would convince no one who did not wish to be convinced. However, he agreed under protest to be tested by Karlis Osis, a parapsychologist at the American Society for Psychical Research in New York. While he described the contents of a sealed envelope, an EEG machine gave a readout that showed his brain producing beta and theta waves at the same time, which was thought at the time to result from a mechanical malfunction, but which Bengson later discovered was reported in relation to some adepts of yogic meditation. Mayrick also tested positively for psychokinesis on a random event generator.2

Later that year, Mayrick discovered he was able to relieve pain in people to whom he was giving readings. Bengston was suffering chronic back pain at the time, and took the opportunity to test this by asking Mayrick to lay a hand on the spot. In ten minutes the pain was gone and did not return.

Bengston set up an informal double-blind test of Mayrick's diagnostic abilities at Deepdale Hospital in Little Neck, New York. Mayrick successfully described the ailments of all eight of the patients he was confronted with.

Mayrick went on to provide healing on a regular basis. Bengston observed closely and in due course, at Mayrick's urging, began to practice healing himself. He attempted it first with minor ailments, experiencing the same phenomena as Mayrick described: a sense of energy running through his body, a growing warmth in his hand, and a sense of 'hot spots' on a patient's body indicating areas that needed to be treated. Bengston also researched psychic healing literature, learning about the experiments of Bernard Grad, Justa Smith and Dolores Krieger.

Laboratory Experiments with Mice

Bengson now attempted to get Mayrick to agree to have his healing ability tested in a laboratory, and arranged through David Krinsley, a friend and eminent geologist, to set up a controlled experiment at Queens College of the City University of New York. However, Mayrick would not be persuaded, forcing Bengston to take his place at the last minute. Bengston was successful in curing all five experimental mice, which had been injected with cancer cells that normally produced 100% fatality within 27 days.

Bengston and Krinsley then replicated the experiment, using as healers Krinsley, two graduate students who were highly sceptical, and Marvin Wasserman, head of the Queens University biology department, having been given the necessary training by Bengston. All seven experimental mice were cured, as were four of the control mice.

The experiment was replicated again in a different lab with some change in the healer personnel. The results of all replications were an 87.9% cure rate in 33 experimental mice. An experiment to similarly heal cancer in carrots, which do not have an immune system, failed, suggesting that energy healing's efficacy was related to the immune system.

Bengston and Krinsley summarized the initial mouse experiments as follows:

> We obtained five experimental mice with mammary adenocarcinoma (code: H2712; host strain: C3H/HeJ; strain of origin: C3H/HeHu), which had a predicted 100% fatality between 14 and 27 days subsequent to injection. Bengston treated these mice for 1 hour per day for 1 month. The tumors developed a "blackened area," then they ulcerated, imploded, and closed, and the mice lived their normal life spans. Control mice sent to another city died within the predicted time frame. Three replications using skeptical volunteers (including D.K.) and laboratories at Queens College and St. Joseph's College produced an overall cure rate of 87.9% in 33 experimental mice. An additional

> informal test by Krinsley at Arizona State resulted in the same patterns. Histological studies indicated viable cancer cells through all stages of remission. Reinjections of cancer into the mice in remission in Arizona and New York did not take, suggesting a stimulated immunological response to the treatment. Our tentative conclusions: Belief in laying on of hands is not necessary in order to produce the effect; there is a stimulated immune response to treatment, which is reproducible and predictable; and the mice retain an immunity to the same cancer after remission. Future work should involve testing on various diseases and conventional immunological studies of treatment effects on experimental animals.[3]

After concentrating on his sociology career for two decades, and psychically healing only family and friends, Bengston expanded his experimentation in 2000 and increased his healing practice. Further experiments with mice at the University of Connecticut's Medical Center in 2002 were shut down despite promising initial results.

Resonant Bonding

Bengston formulated his theory of resonant bonding, which posits that living creatures share an energetic bond by which they can influence each other's health. This, he hypothesized, might be why control mice situated near the experimental mice and the healers tended also to become cancer-free. He also hypothesized that resonant bonding might explain the placebo effect. He and a doctor conducted further experiments with mice, including healing over a distance, and co-authored a paper published in 2007.[4]

Bengston had himself tested with functional magnetic resonance imaging, showing that his brain responded when he unwittingly held pictures of cancer-afflicted animals, or did healing on human patients. Using electroencephalography, Bengston and his co-authors found that the healer's brainwave frequency would match Schumann's resonance – an electromagnetic wave that continually circles the planet – and the patient's brainwaves would harmonize as well.[5] Clinical experimentation with charging substances such as water and cotton with healing energy also had good results.

Patterns in Energy Healing

In his autobiography, Bengston noted certain patterns that he observed in his, Mayrick's and others' psychic healing of cancer and other diseases, in both experimental and clinical settings:

- Neither the healer nor the patient needed to believe in it for it to be successful.
- The most aggressive types of cancers were most responsive to treatment.
- Healing did not work as well, if at all, after radiation or chemotherapy.
- Some human patients genuinely did not want to recover from illnesses, and so would not return after initial positive results, or otherwise sabotage treatment.

- After an injury, the sooner the patient was treated, the faster and better the results were.
- The longer a patient had had a condition, the longer it took to cure.
- Younger patients with generally good health were easier to treat than older patients with multiple conditions.
- Sometimes an initial aggravation of symptoms would occur, prior to cure.
- Mice cured in the experiments also became immune to the same type of cancer, as they would not grow tumours even if re-injected with the cancer cells.
- Water and cotton given psychic-healing treatments became curative if applied or ingested.
- Anyone, even sceptics, could acquire healing ability if they followed Bengston's instructions and training.
- Negative emotions could interfere with healers' ability.
- Cancer remission happened intermittently, in bursts alternating with plateaus.

Academic Resistance

Mayrick predicted to Bengston in the 70s that there was no point in conducting scientific experiments on psychic healing since the medical and science communities would never accept the findings. Bengston's experience had confirmed this at least up to the time of writing of his autobiography in 2010. 'I'm still hoping that Ben was wrong about that word "never",' he wrote.[6]

Neither of the scientists in the biology field who aided him in conducting experiments – Marvin Wasserman and Carol Hayes, chair of the biology department on the Brooklyn campus of St. Joseph's College in New York at the time – were willing to continue with psychic healing experimentation. Bengston speculated that this was because it was relevant to their specialisms, and their careers would be at greater risk than his or Krinsley's, neither of whom were involved in biology or medicine.

Although experiments had been agreed to at the University of Connecticut, Bengston was distressed by the indifference and hostility he encountered, being refused proper facilities and ostracized by the department head. He subsequently learned that a higher authority in the university was resentful that his program had been approved.

Bengston expected to arouse debate when he spoke publicly about his healing experiments, but was instead typically met only with silence. Scientists and doctors expressed fear of losing either reputations or licenses for being associated with psychic healing; in other cases, they rejected his evidence outright.

In an article entitled 'The Boggle Effect', Bengston speculated on why people dismiss experimental evidence even when they cannot find methodological flaws. He wrote: 'My experience is that there are many scientists who have an abiding interest in various anomalies, but have exercised their academic discretion so that their public research remains safely within established paradigms'.[7] He lamented

that oncology and medical science generally showed no signs of interest in his work.

Theoretical Speculation

In a chapter of his autobiography entitled 'Touching the Source', Bengston ruminated on his experience of psychic healing and how it might work. He wrote that he accesses 'the Source', a wellspring providing an 'infinite supply' of healing energy. 'My mind moves … into superconsciousness and a sense of higher intelligence, then past that into peace, and past that into Nothingness – a place of pure potential where all possibilities exist at the same time'.[8] He speculated that healing involves accessing these parallel existences:

> Perhaps there's a place where you crushed your finger, and a place where you did not; there's a place where the finger heals, and a place where it does not. These places are probably very close to each other, so if we act quickly before your thoughts have had a chance to harden around a negative reality, maybe we can make it back together to the noncrushed-finger time.

With slow-developing conditions such as some cancers, he proposed, the healer possibly moves the patient through a series of existences in which the cancer is successively diminished. 'Perhaps this means moving forward in time or perhaps it means moving back', Bengston wrote, 'because inside the Source present, past, and future are without distinction'. Consciousness is not plural, he noted, so perhaps the healer's and patient's consciousness travel together.[9]

Stored Healing Energy

In experiments reported in 2018, Bengston investigated the possibility of healing energy being transported by means of inert materials. Bengston placed cotton wool that had been treated with healing energy near plates containing breast cancer cells in vitro. Analysis found modest effects on certain genes, inducing significant changes (p value range 0.034–0.008) in the expression of genes related to cancer and immunity. Two genes, ACLY and IL-1b, emerged as potential markers of healing associated biological effects. When the hands-on Bengston method was applied directly to cells, both ACLY and IL-1b showed changes in expression, albeit to varying degrees.

A similar process was carried out using audio files made during healing sessions in place of treated cotton wool. Here, cell cultures exposed to audio files underwent significant changes in gene expression in 67 out of 168 genes involved in the crosstalk between immunity and cancer.

These findings hint at the potential therapeutic value of stored and recorded healing energy, although further research, including in vivo studies, is needed to understand its full impact on health and disease.[10]

In a follow-up study published in 2020, Bengston and coauthors described testing healing responses in a mouse model. In this experiment they played the healing recording that had been used previously in the cell culture study to groups of mice.

Over 21 days, there was no significant change in tumour growth compared to a control group, but tumours in the treatment group seemed smaller. Bengston also looked at the mice's immune systems, finding that B cells increased in all groups, and that, while T cells stayed mostly unchanged, natural killer (NK) and natural killer T (NKT) cells (related to fighting cancer), showed promise.

Cytokines, which are molecules linked to the immune system, were also studied. Some, like GM-CSF and IL7, increased significantly, possibly affecting the immune response. However, IL6, which can promote cancer, had a mixed impact.

The authors concluded that, while this pilot study failed to show immediate dramatic results, it suggested that the recorded healing method might have positive effects, especially with longer treatments.[11]

In a 2023 study, Bengston and coworkers explored the use of audio recordings to influence tumour growth in mouse models. The study encompassed various cancer types, including breast cancer and melanoma, in mice exposed to daily audio recordings that were taken during Bengston Method healing sessions. The findings revealed a significant slowdown in tumour growth among mice with breast cancer exposed to the audio recordings ($p < 0.0001$). However, when it came to melanoma, the audio intervention had limited impact on tumour growth, indicating variability in responsiveness among different tumour types.

These audio recordings are converted from magnetic and other sensor data taken during healing. The healing effect on the mice was found to be related to the presence of exceptionally low frequencies, the exploration of which the authors give high priority in future replications.[12]

COVID-19

In a 2023 paper published in the *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, Bengston and Margaret Nies examined the therapeutic potential of 'informed water' – water infused with healing intention – on COVID-19 patients. The experiment involved 160 hospitalized patients in West Africa who were randomly divided into two groups: one receiving informed water and an anti-viral therapy, and a control group receiving untreated water. The experiment was fully double-blinded, so that neither the patients nor the medical administrators knew what was in any of the prepared bottles of water.

Analysis revealed that the group receiving the treated water reported significant improvements in general well-being ($p = 0.0001$), reduced fever ($p = 0.01$), sore throats ($p = 0.0006$), and reduced coughs ($p = 0.02$) compared to the control group. PCR (polymerase chain reaction – used to measure viral load) tests on day six showed a significantly lower positivity rate in the treated group. This suggests that informed water can be a viable medium for storing healing energy making it scalable for broader applications.[13]

Process Research Review

In a 2019 publication, Bengston looked for biological and physical correlates to anomalous healing. The paper cautiously discusses the implications of recording healing information, and questions the role of conscious intention in the healing process, ultimately underscoring the complexity of understanding these phenomena in a scientific context.14

Research Challenges

In an article published in 2015, Bengston, Garret Yount (Institute of Noetic Sciences) and Emeritus Professor Gloria Gronowicz (University of Connecticut), discussed preclinical models for investigating the impact of human biofields on biological systems, shedding light on various biofield therapies such as external qigong, Johrei, Reiki, and Therapeutic Touch. They noted the need, established in recent reviews of biofield research quality, for independent replication, improved blinding, and better use of power estimations (the minimum sample size required for an experiment, given a desired significance level, effect size, and statistical power). They observed that experiments with multiple targets and dose responses were gaining attention; for example, studies demonstrated that therapeutic touch (TT) can increase cell proliferation but varying treatment frequencies are required for different cell types. In vivo models appeared promising, as inexperienced individuals taught biofield therapies achieved consistent results in curing mice with mammary cancer cells in Bengston's own research.

The authors also noted that the immune system is emerging as a valuable target in biofield studies, affecting inflammatory responses, natural killer cell activity, and cancer metastasis. Challenges persist in characterizing the biofield's nature, defining optimal treatment frequencies and assessing practitioner effectiveness, they said, but that, nevertheless, preclinical models offer a pathway for understanding biofield therapy mechanisms, guiding clinical protocols, and integrating biofield treatments with conventional therapies.15

Future Research Recommended

Bengson acknowledged that his practical and experimental work left a number of questions unanswered, and these should be the focus of future research. They include:

- How many treatments are necessary to produce remission?
- With distance healing, how does the rate of remission vary with distance?
- Do multiple healers add to the positive effects?
- Can healing energy be detected and measured?
- Can a person or animal who has become immune to a disease, having been cured of it by energy healing, pass this immunity on to offspring?
- Can blood from an organism that has been remitted be used as a vaccine to treat others?

Works

Bengston's 2010 book *The Energy Cure*16 recounts Bengston's journey into healing, the development of his technique and his early experiences both clinical and in the lab.

An accompanying CD set, *Hands On Healing: A Training Course in the Energy Cure*, teaches the healing techniques and provides drill and practice.

Bengston's papers are too many to list, but may be found categorized by topic on his website here. The site provides more information on psychic healing, resources, current and anticipated projects, workshops and other resources.

Video

Interviews, addresses and so forth by Bengston on an assortment of topics can be found here.

Website

bengstonresearch.com

KM Wehrstein

Literature

Bengston, W. (2012). The boggle effect. *EdgeScience* 12, 3-5.

Bengston, W. (2019). Examining biological and physical correlates to anomalous healing. *Journal of the American Holistic Veterinary Medical Association* 55 (Summer).

Bengston, W., with Fraser, S (2010). *The Energy Cure: Unraveling the Mystery of Hands-On Healing*. Boulder, Colorado, USA: Sounds True.

Bengston, W., & Krinsley, D. (2000). The effect of the 'laying on of hands' on transplanted breast cancer in mice, *Journal of Scientific Exploration* 14/3, 353-64.

Bengston, W., & Moga, M. (2007). Resonance, placebo effects, and Type II errors: Some implications from healing research for experimental methods. *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine* 13/3, 317-27.

Bengston, W., Gronowicz, G., & Yount, G. (2015). Challenges for preclinical investigations of human biofield modalities, *Global Advances in Health and Medicine* 4 (supplement).

Beseme, S., Bengston, W., Radin, D., Turner, M., & McMichael, J. (2018). Transcriptional changes in cancer cells induced by exposure to a healing method. *Dose-Response* 16/3, 1-8.

Beseme, S., Bengston, W., Radin, D., Turner, M., & McMichael, J. (2020). Effects induced in vivo by exposure to magnetic signals derived from a healing technique. *Dose-Response* 18/1, 1-10.

Bengston, W., Cizdziel, P., Tanaka, A., & Matsuda, H. (2023). Differential in vivo effects on cancer models by recorded magnetic signals derived from a healing technique. Dose-Response 21/2, 1-10.

Bengston, W., & Nies, M. (2023). A double blind, placebo controlled clinical trial on hospitalized Covid patients using informed water. *Journal of Scientific Exploration*. 37/1, 36-41.

Hendricks, L., Bengston, W., & Gunkelman, J. (2010). The healing connection: EEG harmonics, entrainment, and Schumann's resonances. *Journal of Scientific Exploration* 24/4, 655-66.

Endnotes

Footnotes

- 1. Bengston (2010), 1-2.
- 2. Bengston (2010). All information in this article is drawn from this source except where otherwise noted.
- 3. Bengston and Krinsley (2000), 353 (Abstract).
- 4. Bengston & Moga (2007).
- 5. Hendricks, Bengston & Gunkelman (2010).
- 6. Bengston (2010), 144.
- 7. Bengston (2012), 4.
- 8. Bengston (2010), 211.
- 9. Bengston (2010), 212.
- 10. Beseme et al. (2018).
- 11. Beseme et al. (2020).
- 12. Bengston et al. (2023).
- 13. Bengston & Nies (2023).
- 14. Bengston (2019).
- 15. Bengston et al. (2015).
- 16. Bengston with Fraser (2010).