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## Healing Touch therapy gains popularity

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By Vivianne Rodrigues

NEW YORK (Reuters) - It's not traditional medicine but patients love it: an unconventional therapy called "Healing Touch" that is gaining acceptance in U.S. hospitals.

The technique uses light touch and deep breathing to address energy imbalances, its advocates say. Though research on it is limited, the therapy is practiced at 30 U.S. hospitals and by nearly 2,000 certified practitioners, according to Healing Touch International based in Denver, Colorado.

"Healing Touch raised my awareness and brought me to a deep state of relaxation, which is not something you can get just by taking pain medicine," said Carla Santos, 40, a nurse who underwent lung surgery in October and receives Healing Touch therapy at New York University Medical Center. "Pain medication takes the pain but doesn't make you feel good or calm."

NYU Medical Center has approved Healing Touch as a complement to traditional rehabilitation, offering patients and staff free sessions as part of the hospital's Mind Body Patient Care Program. The system incorporates ancient Asian healing techniques and was developed in the 1980s by Janet Mentgen, a nurse in Colorado.

A Healing Touch practitioner will gently glide their hands through the patient's energy field or lightly touch affected areas such as shoulders, feet or forehead. The practitioner concentrates on each area for a few minutes.

Lisa Anselme, executive director of Healing Touch International said that Healing Touch is not meant to stand alone. "Healing Touch is a complementary therapy not intended to replace standard treatment," said Anselme, a registered nurse and Healing Touch practitioner.

Jackie Levin, a nurse who coordinates the NYU program, said the treatment works well for people with anxiety, depression and stress associated with surgery and cancer treatments. "It's very safe, very calming and everyone can benefit from it," said Levin.

"I would still see my doctor, but I wanted to make sure that my mind and body were in sync," said Nancy Hauserman, a college professor who used the therapy. "In fact, my own doctor was extremely impressed with how quickly my wound healed."