



Understanding Healing: A Conceptual Analysis

Akhmedova Shakhodat Makhmutovna
Termiz State University

ABSTRACT

The article focuses on describe the use of a rigorous methodology, concept analysis, to clarify the meaning of healing and propose an operational definition of healing in order to further the scientific understanding and translation of optimal healing environments (OHE)s into practice.

В статье основное внимание уделяется описанию использования строгой методологии, концептуальному анализу для разъяснения значения исцеления и предложению рабочего определения исцеления с целью дальнейшего научного понимания и применения ОЗЭ на практике.

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Healing is a commonly used term, and yet rigorous research on the definition and meaning of healing has been published infrequently, and understanding of the concept remains confusing and inexact. Clinicians and patients are overwhelmed with a healthcare system focused on disease over health creation, reductionist, fragmented, costly, and often ineffective. In response, there has been an increasing recognition that quality healthcare and the delivery of that care need to take a more holistic, patient-centric approach, an approach that emphasizes healing as important as curing. In 2004, Samueli Institute, Alexandria, Virginia, proposed a whole-system, healing-focused framework for delivering care and coined the term optimal healing environments (OHE). An OHE is comprised of people in relationships, their health-creating and healing behaviors, and the surrounding physical environment. An OHE supports and stimulates patient healing by addressing the social, psychological, physical, spiritual, and behavioral components of healthcare, enabling the person's innate capacity to heal. The OHE framework is composed of 4 domains or integrated environments that reinforce each other by acting synergistically. Each environment is applicable on a personal level to the important relationships in our lives and to the organizations and physical environments where we work, play, and receive healthcare. (6.p76)

internal: healing intension personal wholeness

interpersonal: healing relationship. healing organizations

behavioral: healthy lifestyle. integrative care

external: healing spaces. ecological resilience

making healing as important as curing

We used concept analysis methodology because of its stated purposes to examine the basic elements of a widely used concept to clarify meaning, develop operational definitions that help validate the construct, and facilitate instrument development in practice. The Walker and Avant method of concept analysis was employed as it is widely used and highly regarded in the field as a process for bringing about clarification, identification, and meaning of concepts. The methodology has critics, particularly regarding depth, rigor, and

replicability of the findings as the methods used to analyze are influenced by the skill, knowledge, culture, and understanding of the analyst and the framework being used. The Walker and Avant method of concept analysis is criticized for lack of integration between the steps and limited applicability and clinical relevancy. We employed multiple actions to mitigate these criticisms throughout the process.

Definitions of healing from existing concept analysis work:

J.A. Glaister Healing is a natural active and multidimensional process that is individually expressed with common patterns. Healing is influenced by body-condition, personal attitudes, and relationships. (1. p 67)

D. Mc.Elliott Theoretical definition: Healing is a positive, subjective, unpredictable process involving transformation to a new sense of wholeness, spiritual transcendence, and reinterpretation of life. Operational definition: Healing is the personal experience of transcending suffering and transforming to wholeness. (6.p251)

M.C. Wendler Healing is an experiential, energy-requiring process in which space is created through a caring relationship in a process of expanding consciousness and results in a sense of wholeness, integration, balance, and transformation and which can never be fully known. (7. p836)

W.J.W. Robb Self-healing is the active, personal process that, upon the use of an energetic catalyst, results in the rechanneling of innate, vital energy forces throughout the journey towards transcendence. (3.p74)

A.A. Smith No definition proposed. Three attributes of healing:

Sense of transcending the immediate environment or situation

Sense of timeless connection, unity, and interdependence with the self and others:

Sense of inner knowing, strength, and peace (8.p23)

The word healing comes from the old-English term *haelen*, meaning “wholeness” and often refers to the process of moving toward a desired wholeness or achievement of cohesion. Healing is an intervention, an outcome, and a process, and at times, all three. It also describes an ability or power, energy, and cleansing of grief, trouble, or evil. The concept is relevant in a wide range of disciplines, including medicine, nursing, psychology, public health, education, religion, and spirituality. Healing occurs in multiple dimensions—physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, familial, social, communal, and environmental. Healing occurs at multiple levels from the micro level, as in cellular wound healing, to the macro level, as in national and global healing. Healing originates from within the individual and from external sources (eg, human healers and God) or substances (eg, herbs and medicines). Perspectives on healing come from health-care practitioners, patients, priests, rabbis, energy practitioners, spiritual healers, people close to death, people living with pain and other chronic illnesses, people who have suffered abuse and neglect, and those who have suffered hardship such as divorce, miscarriage, or death of a child.(2,p231)

Defining attributes are the characteristics of a concept that differentiate that concept from other similar or related concepts. Four defining attributes emerged in this concept analysis. Healing is a holistic transformative process; it is personal; it is innate or naturally occurring; it is multidimensional; and it involves repair and recovery of mind, body, and spirit.

The positive, transformative process, progression, or journey does not occur in a single instant but evolves over time. Studies support healing as a process of moving away from an undesired state to a state of renewal. The process is dynamic, emergent, and experiential. It is a journey and an experience. Multiple healthcare providers and patients describe it as “an evolving process that may require changes in direction and final destination.” (1.p63) Healing involves the whole person—mind, body, and spirit. Holistic processes integrate multiple dimensions synergistically, creating a new dimension that is more than the sum of the original dimensions; “Healing requires understanding the patient as a whole person, not just addressing a discrete physical problem. (2 p60) Though cure usually occurs solely on the physical or mental level, healing does not; it occurs holistically in the mind, body, and spirit.

The aim of this study was to extract the defining attributes of healing in order to provide a clear and comprehensive definition of healing, a definition that could be used to operationalize the concept and measure it. The predominant clinical use of the concept is to convey full recovery from illness or repair of injury as in wound healing, disease management, and cure. The team acknowledged the biomedical use of the concept and included repair and recovery as a defining attribute. This decision was the result of significant debate and

return to the literature with the conclusion that healing involves repair and recovery in the multiple dimensions of our humanity; mind, body, and spirit. Our use of the OHE framework to guide the concept analysis led us to focus on literature that examined healing as a holistic concept over the prevailing biomedical focus on repair and recovery.

As early as 400 BC, Hippocrates described healing as a natural process leading to restoration of wholeness, creating harmony between body and soul.⁸ Twenty-first century work added the dimension of the mind. Our search for definitions and descriptions of healing led to a set of defining attributes that support the conclusions of previous concept analyses. This congruence of attributes described across centuries validated our understanding of healing as an innate transformative process. The existing literature on the subject also provided an understanding that healing requires a brokenness or disruption of health and that the facilitation of healing, although personal in nature, does not occur in isolation but in relationship with one's self or another, frequently between healer and healee but also between the person and an important other. The literature also revealed that outcomes of healing include positive change, finding meaning, and the realization of personal wholeness.

An operational definition of healing with antecedents, defining attributes, and consequences emerged through the process of concept analysis. We tested the findings using multiple cases, ultimately resulting in a model case, a borderline case, and a contrary case.

The definition provided here and supported by the literature contends that healing is a holistic, transformative process of repair and recovery in mind, body, and spirit resulting in positive change, finding meaning, and movement towards self-realization of wholeness, regardless of the presence or absence of disease. Healing may or may not include cure, defined as the eradication of physical symptoms of illness or disease.

This definition of healing, as well as its antecedents, consequences, and empirical referents, provides a solid, evidence-based foundation for understanding and describing the seminal construct of the framework.

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