

## Discursive practices of caring touch in health practice

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### Abstract

Of all the senses present in the human body it is perhaps the sense of touch that receives least attention. Despite much of the literature suggesting many benefits of caring touch, the complex, multiple constructions of touch can cause anxiety or confusion for people when the subject of touch or touching is raised. Moreover, its role is immeasurably more complex during the working life of health professionals. Understanding dominant constructions of touch, and deconstructing their meanings and practices as articulated by various health practitioners, enabled the identification of the contexts and occasions when certain touching practices are legitimate or condoned and/or are inhibited or prevented. This post-structural discourse analysis aimed to build understanding and appreciation of the hidden discourses that drive health practitioners' use or non-use of touch. Deconstructing the practice of touch provided opportunities to consider taken for granted, ways of thinking that may constrain thought and action. Semi-structured interviews conducted with health professionals revealed multiple discourses existing in the working life of health practitioners that interplay in the decision making of using caring touch. Analysis highlighted concerns surrounding misinterpretation and similarly, personal conflicts and confusions with regard to using touch in practice. Revealing the discursive practices surrounding touch has provided new information to facilitate greater understanding of the role of touch in current health care and the circumstances that allow or disallow its practice. It is hoped on-going findings from the study will open space for opportunities to challenge the status quo currently operating in health practice.

**Keywords:** Health Science, Human Touch, Active ageing, Student engagement.



### Biography:

Nicola Power is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Inter professional Health Practice at Auckland University of Technology in Auckland, New Zealand. She has been lecturing for over 25 years in the field of health and is in the final stages of PhD completion. She completed a Masters of Health Science in the subject of Human Touch and is a leading researcher on this area in New Zealand. Other research interests are in the area of active ageing and student engagement.

### Speaker Publications:

1. "Student engagement in a Human Anatomy and Physiology course: a New Zealand perspective"; AJP Advances in Physiology Education / 2018 / 42(4):636-643.
2. "Student engagement in a compulsory introductory physiology course"; Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning / 2017 / 17(1):52.
3. "Introductory anatomy and physiology in an undergraduate nursing curriculum"; AJP Advances in Physiology Education / 2017 / 41(1):56-61.

[3<sup>rd</sup> European Conference on Public Health, Well-being and Healthcare Management](#); Webinar; August 19-20, 2020.

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