

Study proves prayer heals

By Melissa Radler
Staff Reporter

The power of prayer stands up to scientific scrutiny, says a study.

It found that heart patients at the Mid America Heart Institute in Kansas City, Mo., fared 11 per cent better than a control group when volunteers prayed for their recovery.

"I could have told you that's true, speaking from my own experience," said Irene Aman, a chaplain at St. Paul's Hospital in Vancouver.

Added Rev. Paul Walker, a chaplain at Royal Columbian Hospital in New Westminster, "I'm delighted that people are remembering that prayer used to be part of the normal care that a sick person needs, wants, expects and receives."

The year-long Kansas City study covered 990 patients, all of whom suffered from serious, life-threatening cardiac conditions such as heart attacks and heart disease.

Patients were split into two groups based on the last digit of their medical-record numbers. Patients with even numbers were prayed for; those with odd numbers only received normal medical care.

The volunteers, all Christians and mostly women, prayed daily outside the hospital for 28 consecutive days after a new patient was admitted. Patients were not asked their religion.

The study found that patients being prayed for fared significantly better by 35 medical measurements.

Aman said prayer is important because "there's a lot more to a person than just the physical. There are spiritual, emotional, physical, mental and social needs, and health is a reflection of the relationship of all the aspects of our being."

Fewer than five per cent of hospital patients request pastoral care but the number rises when chaplains approach them.

"Even people who don't have an affiliation with any religious body — they still want, in their heart, a connection with God," said Walker.



Colin Price — The Province

Irene Aman of St. Paul's Hospital believes in power of prayer.