

THEUPPER ALDE BENEFICE

The Twenty-ninth Sunday of the Year (Trinity 19)



Patients admitted to hospital with heart problems suffer fewer complications if someone prays for them, according to scientists in the United States. The study, carried out at Duke University Medical Centre in North Carolina, found that patients who received alternative therapy following angioplasty were 25% to 30% less likely to suffer complications. Those who received 'intercessory prayer' had the greatest success rate. The study was carried out some years ago between April 1997 and April 1998, involved one hundred and fifty patients who had all undergone angioplasty – whereby a balloon is positioned in a hardened and narrowed artery and inflated to force it open. This procedure was followed in all cases by coronary artery stenting – which involves a flexible metal tube being inserted into the artery to keep it open.

Patients were chosen at random to receive coronary stenting with standard care or coronary stenting plus one of four alternative therapies – guided imagery, stress relaxation, healing touch or intercessory prayer.

Intercessory prayer was provided by seven prayer groups of varying denominations around the world. Neither the researchers nor the patients were aware who was being prayed for but the results showed that, of all the therapies, prayer appeared to have the greatest therapeutic benefits.

One of the nurse practitioners associated with the study said that the clinical outcomes between treatment groups were not significantly different but those receiving alternative therapies 'had lower complication rates and a lower incidence of post-procedural ischemia during hospitalization'. Complications after angioplasty include death, heart failure, post procedural ischemia, repeat angioplasty or heart attack.

An associate professor at the University medical Centre said, '*Some of the greatest scientific achievements have come from those who step outside the box and I believe that this is what this study does. The results tend to lean towards prayer helping people but more study is needed.*'

Of course, we are never going to be able to have ultimate proof but as Christians we know that prayer plays such an important part in our lives and there are many reasons for this. Chief amongst those reasons must be that prayer is an opportunity to demonstrate our trust in and our dependence upon God and maintaining our relationship with him.