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Research Roundup: Massage is Good Medicine

Two independent clinical studies demonstrate that massage therapy eases pain and improves recovery time for people suffering from lower back injuries and burns.

"These findings emphasize what professional massage therapists know: massage is good medicine," said Nancy Porambo, AMTA President. "Massage therapy provided by a professional massage therapist is being increasingly viewed by physicians and their patients as an important component of integrated care. Nearly 9 of 10 American consumers believe that massage can be effective in reducing pain. And, a growing body of clinical research continues to validate that."

Massage Therapy Can Help Low-Back Pain

In a study¹ published in the February 2014 edition of *Scientific World Journal*, researchers investigated whether chronic low-back pain therapy with massage therapy alone was as effective as combining it with non-steroid anti-inflammatory drugs. The study was conducted on 59 individuals divided into two groups, all of whom suffered from low-back pain and were diagnosed with degenerative changes of the spine, other intervertebral disc diseases or spine pain.

In both patient groups, the pain measured was significantly reduced and the level of disability showed significant improvement compared to the baseline. **Researchers concluded massage had a positive effect on patients with chronic low-back pain and propose that the use of massage causes fast therapeutic results and that, in practice, it could help to reduce the use of anti-inflammatory drugs in the treatment of chronic low-back pain.**

Massage to Reduce Burn Scars

In a separate study² published in the journal *Burns*, 146 burn patients with scars were randomly divided into two groups. All patients received standard rehabilitation therapy for hypertrophic scars—known as raised scars that are typically red, thick and may be itchy or painful—and 76 patients received additional burn scar rehabilitation massage therapy. Both before and after the treatment, researchers assessed the scar characteristics for thickness, melanin, erythema, transepidermal water loss (TEWL), sebum, and elasticity.

While both groups showed improvement, the massage group showed a significant decrease in scar thickness, melanin, erythema, and TEWL. There was a significant intergroup difference in skin elasticity with the massage group showing substantial improvement.

Researchers concluded that burn rehabilitation massage therapy is effective in improving pain, itching, and scar characteristics in hypertrophic scars after a burn.

References

1. Majchrzycki M, Kocur P, Kotwicki T. Deep tissue massage and nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs for low back pain: a prospective randomized trial. *ScientificWorldJournal*. 2014; 287597.
2. Choa YS, Jeona JH, Hongb A, et. al. The effect of burn rehabilitation massage therapy on hypertrophic scar after burn: A randomized controlled trial. *Burns*, 2014; 10.1016

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