

# MASSAGE THERAPY & HOSPICE PALLIATIVE CARE

Massage therapy is being increasingly integrated into palliative care and hospice settings.<sup>1,2,3</sup> Massage therapy is an effective, low-risk, non-invasive, non-drug, complementary treatment that can help to improve the quality of life for patients in palliative care.

Massage therapy can address the patient's symptoms, the side effects of various treatments, and the physical, psychological, social and emotional consequences of living with a life-limiting illness. Recent studies have proven that massage therapy can decrease pain and fatigue and positively affect anxiety and depression.

## MASSAGE THERAPY & PAIN RELIEF

Massage therapy has been shown to significantly reduce pain perception for patients in palliative care, particularly in individuals with an initially high pain perception.<sup>4</sup>

Massage therapy, combined with physical therapy or exercise, has been shown to reduce pain and improve mood in patients with terminal cancer.<sup>5</sup>

In another study, pain was decreased both immediately following treatment and sustained over several weeks, and pain reduction occurred in a variety of locations in the body.<sup>6</sup>

Massage therapy is a safe treatment option with infrequent adverse events and patients should consider massage therapy as a therapeutic option to help manage pain associated with cancer.<sup>7</sup>

## MASSAGE THERAPY & ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION

Physiological relaxation is closely tied to immediate reduction in anxiety, and patients' anxiety perception was found to significantly decrease immediately following massage therapy treatment.<sup>4</sup>

Massage therapy can help improve mood and decrease emotional stress in patients with advanced cancer, most consistently reducing the subjective levels of anxiety reported by patients.<sup>6,8</sup>

There is evidence for an improvement in depressive mood through massage therapy, however the type of massage and the setting can be important influencing factors.<sup>4</sup>

## MASSAGE THERAPY & FATIGUE

Back massage is an effective option to reduce chemotherapy-induced fatigue.<sup>9</sup>

Patients receiving cancer treatment report improved sleep, which has been linked to improvements in fatigue, irritability and pain tolerance.<sup>10</sup>

In hospitalized adolescent patients with cancer, massage therapy was found to increase sleep and improve relaxation.<sup>11</sup>

## MASSAGE THERAPY & QUALITY OF LIFE

Massage therapy can be provided in homes, hospices, and a variety of other settings, and can improve the quality of life for patients with life-limiting conditions by reducing pain, fatigue, anxiety and depression.



# MASSAGE THERAPY & HOSPICE PALLIATIVE CARE

## TREATMENT CONSIDERATIONS & MODIFICATIONS

Modifications to massage therapy treatment are required for patients in hospice or palliative care. Registered Massage Therapists are able to adapt and modify treatments to account for a patient's lack of mobility or different treatment environments.

**Position** – Depending on the patient's preferences and level of comfort, changes to a patient's position may include laying on the side, sitting in a recliner or lying on the back, among several other options.

**Duration** – Longer treatments are likely impossible due to a patient's compromised energy, often presenting with fatigue, drowsiness, sleepiness, and weakness related to the disease process and/or treatments, and Registered Massage Therapists are able to adjust the duration of the treatment based on current symptom presentation.

**Pressure** – All individuals will vary on the preferred level of pressure during a massage therapy treatment. For patients in palliative care, the pressure will be lighter and gentler, particularly for patients with more fragile health.

**Environment** – Registered Massage Therapists are able to work around various types of medical equipment when treating patients in palliative care, and are able to adapt to frequent interruptions as required.

**Communication** – Registered Massage Therapists pay close attention to a patient's body language and other nonverbal cues, and will communicate with the patient's caregivers and other members of the health care team when appropriate.

### References

1. Berger, L., Tavares, M., & Berger, B. A Canadian experience of integrating complementary therapy in a hospital palliative care unit. *Journal of Palliative Medicine*. 2013 Oct;16(10):1294-8.
2. Oneschuk, D., Balneaves, L., Verhoef, M., Boon, H., Demmer, C., & Chiu, L. The status of complementary therapy services in Canadian palliative care settings. *Supportive Care In Cancer: Official Journal of The Multinational Association of Supportive Care In Cancer*. 2007 Aug;15(8):939-47.
3. Kozak, L., Kayes, L., McCarty, R., Walkinshaw, C., Congdon, S., Kleinberger, J., & ... Standish, L. Use of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) by Washington State hospices. *American Journal Of Hospice & Palliative Care*. 2008 Dec-2009 Jan;25(6):463-8.
4. Falkensteiner, M., Mantovan, F., Müller, I., & Them, C. The use of massage therapy for reducing pain, anxiety, and depression in oncological palliative care patients: a narrative review of the literature. *ISRN Nursing*. 2011:929868.
5. López-Sendín, N., Albuquerque-Sendín, F., Cleland, J. A., & Fernández-de-las-Peñas, C. Effects of physical therapy on pain and mood in patients with terminal cancer: a pilot randomized clinical trial. *Journal of Alternative & Complementary Medicine*. 2012 May;18(5):480-6.
6. Kutner, J. S., Smith, M. C., Corbin, L., Hemphill, L., Benton, K., Mellis, B. K., & ... Fairclough, D. L. Massage therapy versus simple touch to improve pain and mood in patients with advanced cancer: a randomized trial. *Annals of Internal Medicine*. 2008 Sep 16;149(6):369-79.
7. Boyd, C., Crawford, C., Paat, C.F., Price, A., Xenakis, L., Zhang, W., & the Evidence for Massage Therapy (EMT) Working Group. The Impact of Massage Therapy on Function in Pain Populations—A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Randomized Controlled Trials: Part II, Cancer Pain Populations. *Pain Medicine: The Official Journal of the American Academy of Pain Medicine*. 2016 Aug;17(8):1553–68.
8. Smith, M., Yamashita, T., Bryant, L., Hemphill, L., & Kutner, J. Providing massage therapy for people with advanced cancer: what to expect. *Journal of Alternative & Complementary Medicine*. 2009 Apr;15(4):367-71.
9. Karagozoglu, S., & Kahve, E. Effects of back massage on chemotherapy-related fatigue and anxiety: Supportive care and therapeutic touch in cancer nursing. *Applied Nursing Research*. 2013 Nov;26(4):210-7.
10. Toth, M., Marcantonio, E.R., Davis, R.B., Walton, T., Kahn, J.R., & Phillips, R.S. Massage therapy for patients with metastatic cancer: a pilot randomized controlled trial. *Journal of Alternative & Complementary Medicine*. 2013 Jul;19(7):650-6.
11. Jacobs, S., Mowbray, C., Cates, L. M., Baylor, A., Gable, C., Skora, E., & ... Hinds, P. Pilot study of massage to improve sleep and fatigue in hospitalized adolescents with cancer. *Pediatric Blood and Cancer*. 2016 May;63(5):880-6.

