



Massage Therapy Research Roundup, Volume 3

Pain can negatively affect a person's quality of life and impede recovery from illness or injury. It can be occasional, acute or chronic, depending on whether the person has had an accident, is suffering from musculoskeletal dysfunction, or lack of movement or mobility.¹ It's important for individuals to consult with their health care provider for a diagnosis and advice on the best treatment options for their condition. One pain management strategy to consider is massage therapy, which recent research suggests may be a helpful aid for manually controlling symptoms in people suffering metastatic cancer and rheumatoid arthritis, among other illnesses, as well as post-cardiac surgery pain.

Below are some recent findings which highlight the role of massage therapy in pain management, compiled by the **American Massage Therapy Association**.

Massage Therapy for Improved Pain and Sleep in Metastatic Cancer Patients

Research published in *The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*² found that therapeutic massage at home for metastatic cancer patients can improve their overall quality of life by reducing pain and improving sleep quality. American Massage Therapy Association President Winona Bontrager says of the study, "These findings suggest that cancer patients can also benefit from professional massage, both physically and mentally, providing the necessary comfort during advanced stages of the disease."

Massage Therapy for Decreased Pain in Rheumatoid Arthritis Patients

Research published in *Complementary Therapies in Clinical Practice*³ showed that adults with rheumatoid arthritis may feel a decrease in pain, as well as greater grip strength and range of motion in wrists and large upper joints, after receiving regular moderate-pressure massages during a 4-week period. "This research demonstrates the potential value of massage therapy for the estimated 1.3 million Americans living with this chronic condition, with women outnumbering men 2.5-1⁴. Rheumatoid arthritis sufferers are encouraged to speak with their health care provider about the possibility of incorporating routine massage therapy into their current treatment plan to help manage painful symptoms," says American Massage Therapy Association President Winona Bontrager.

Massage Therapy for Reduced Pain, Anxiety and Muscular Tension in Cardiac Surgery Patients

Research published in *The Journal of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery*⁵ indicates that massage therapy can significantly reduce pain, anxiety and muscular tension, as well as enhance relaxation and satisfaction after cardiac surgery. The American Massage Therapy Association acknowledges that cardiac surgery recovery is a very crucial time a patient must endure and this study further suggests that massage therapy can be a useful aid in making the road to recovery an easier journey.

References

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2. Toth M, Marcantonio ER, Davis RB, et al. *Massage Therapy for Patients with Metastatic Cancer: A Pilot Randomized Controlled Trial*. *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*. 2013 January 31.
3. Field T, Diego M., Delgado J., Garcia D., Funk CG., *Rheumatoid Arthritis in Upper Limbs Benefits from Moderate Pressure Massage Therapy*. *Complementary Therapies in Clinical Practice*. 2013 May;19(2):101-3. doi: 10.1016/j.ctcp.2012.12.001.
4. Helmick CG., et al. *Estimates of the Prevalence of Arthritis and Other Rheumatic Conditions in the United States*. *Arthritis & Rheumatism*. 2008 January; 58:15-25.
5. Braun LA. et al., *Massage Therapy for Cardiac Surgery Patients*. *The Journal of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery*. 2012;144:1453-1459.

How to Find a Professional Massage Therapist

Finding a professional massage therapist is vital to a positive massage experience. AMTA massage therapists have demonstrated a level of ability through education and/or testing, adhere to a code of ethics and must meet continuing education requirements. AMTA offers a free professional massage therapist locator service at findamassage therapist.org.

AMTA Consumer Survey Facts

- 75% of individuals surveyed claim their primary reason for receiving a massage in the past 12 months was medical (43%) and stress (32%) related.
- 87% of individuals view massage as being beneficial to overall health and wellness
- 61% of respondents said their physician has recommended they get a massage.