

Promoting the Body's General Well-Being through Massage for Effective Participation in Gainful Economic Activities

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Abstract

This expose argues for the need for adopting massage therapy through rubbing, stroking or kneading of muscles, joints or part of the body with hands or mechanical aids. Being a technique to promote blood flow, relieve tension or pain and prevent adhesions, it is the scientific manipulation of the soft tissues of the body for the purpose of normalizing the tissues. The therapy consists of manual and mechanical techniques which include applying fixed or movable pressure, holding and causing movement to the body. Given the report of many civil servants and cross-section of the working population suffering symptoms of good blood flow, pain and tension, the paper drew the conclusion that massage need be adopted to promote relaxation and well-being as body massage is likely to be the best solution to ones beauty, healthy life and wellness.

Introduction

Health is wealth says an adage. Regular body massage contributes greatly to the general well being and health of the body. Massage is the action of rubbing or pressing someone's body in a way that helps muscles to relax or reduce pain in muscles and joints. Body massage is working and acting on the body with pressure, tension, motion or vibration. This is done with the hands, fingers, elbows, knees, forearm, feet or mechanical aids. Body massage is a systematic therapeutic rubbing, stroking or kneading of muscles, joints or parts of the body manually with or mechanical aids (Brummitt, 2008; Merriam Webster Dictionary, 2012; Wikipedia, 2016). It is also explained as the scientific manipulation of the soft tissues of the body for the purpose of normalizing the tissues. Massage can be performed on bed, chairs or floor while lying on a massage table or bed, sitting

in a massage chair or lying on a mat on the floor.

Many ancient cultures such as that of China, India, Japan, Egypt, Korea, Rome, Greece and Mesopotamia embraced massage as a form of medical care (Claire, 1995; Bian, 2014; Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2014). Massage has developed continuously in China for over 5000years. It is widely, practiced, and taught in hospitals and medical schools. It is an essential part of health maintenance and primary health care. The impact of Per Henrik Ling, a Swedish physical therapist who invented Swedish massage would never be forgotten as the father of massage. Massage also developed alongside athletics in ancient China and Greece.

In the United States of America, massage started to become popular in the middle part of the 19th century. In the 1970s, athletes and nurses used massage to reduce pain and aid sleep

(Macgregor, 2004). United States of America consumers spend between \$4 and \$6 billion on visits to massage therapist as at year 2009 (Central Maryland School Massage, 2013). Ancient Greek Olympians used a specific type of trainer to rub their muscles with oil. The 1984 summer Olympics in Los Angeles was first time that massage therapy was televised as it was being performed on the athletes. Also, during the 1996 summer Olympics in Atlanta, massage was offered as a core medical service to the United States Olympic team (Goodman, 2000).

In Nigeria today, body massage is still considered a luxury for the few. Massage centres are found mostly in the big cities. Massage is still very common or practiced among the rich, elite athletes and professional trainers. A massage is not only deemed useful by these groups but also critical to keeping the body fit and at peak performing level. It is believed that massages can give tremendous positive effects on functioning of the body. With these athletes can be treated better and rehabilitation can be speeded up. The positives of body massage should not be limited to the rich and or professional sports person alone but can be leverage by anyone who practices or engages in regular physical activities for better performance, prevention of minor injuries, a decrease in pain, more focused and reduced recovery time.

Facilities, equipment and supplies of body massage

The facilities, equipment and supplies needed for body massage include, massage tables and chairs, warm-water therapy pools, dry- water massage beds, Vichy showers, creams,

lotions, gels, oil and massage tools or mechanical aids.

Massage tables and chairs:

Specialized massage tables and chairs are used to correctly position the client during massages. A massage table should have an easily cleaned, well padded surface and with good head support that allows the client to breath easily while lying face down. This can be stationary or portable. Ergonomic chair can also be used instead of the massage table. The chair may either be stationary or portable. Portable massage chairs are easier to transport than massage tables. The clients do not need to remove clothing to receive a chair massage. These factors make chair massage more accessible to corporate offices and public locations.

Warm-water therapy pools:

These are temperature controlled warm water therapy pools that are used to perform aquatic body work. The pool is approximately chest deep and temperature controlled to about 35°C.

Dry-water massage beds:

A dry water massage bed uses jets of water to perform the massage of the client's muscles. In this, the client's usually stays dry. There are two common types;

- A water bed-like mattress which contains warm water and jets of water and air bubbles. The client lies on the water bed mattress.
- A foam pad on which the client lies and covered by a plastic sheet which is sprayed by jets of warm water.

Vichy shower:

This is a form of hydrotherapy using series of shower nozzles to spray

large quantities of water over the client while lying in a shallow wet bed with drainage for the water. The nozzles may be adjusted for height, direction and temperature of the water to suit the need of the client.

Massage tools:

Body rock is used for massaging. It is a curved tool usually carved out of stone. It is used to increase the therapist's strength and pressure on certain areas of the body. It can be used directly over the body or on the skin with lubricant such as oil used on the body. These may be heated, oiled or wrapped in cloth. The use of these tools originated from Southeast Asia.

Massage lubricants:

Different types of creams, lotions, gels and oils are used for body massage. The choice to be used depends on the types of massage and the therapist's preference. Massage oil is used in treatments which use a great deal of glide. Massage oils are derived from seeds, nuts, plants and grains. The commonly used oils include; baby oil, coconut oil, mustard oil, sesame oil and pecan oil. Massage oil is thinner than most other massage lubricants and takes a while to absorb into the skin.

Massage creams are made of oils and other ingredients that are beneficial to the skin which increase the viscosity of the product. Massage cream has a tendency to have a longer workability and absorbs well into the skin leaving it soft and supple.

Massage lotions are used to reduce friction but also absorb quickly. They also provide nice glide and absorb enough to provide the ability to perform deep tissue work.

Massage gel gives the glide of oil but without the residue remaining on

the skin generally, massage lubricants are used to lubricate and moisturize the skin and reduce the friction between the skin of the massager and client.

Types of Massage Techniques

There are many types of massage among these are some popular ones such as; Swedish massage, deep tissue massage, sports massage, hot stone therapy massage, foot massage, infant massage, lymphatic massage, medical massage, prostate massage and acupressure. The type that is right for the body at a particular time depends on the unique purpose for obtaining it.

Swedish massage:

It was developed by Dr. Per Henrik Ling; this is the most common type of massage. It is referred to as traditional massage and the first modern method of massage. The techniques used include long gliding strokes, kneading, and friction, tapping and shaking motions that affect the nerves, muscles and glands of the body. This can be done with music at the background and nice-smelling oils. It is ideal for relaxation, increasing circulation and energizing the body.

Deep tissue massage:

This is a deep massage meant to reach deep into the muscles and the fibers they contain. This is done by deep muscles compression and putting friction along the grain of the muscles. This is especially good for muscle damage from an injury such as whiplash, back strain or painful knots in the back and any other muscles strain. It helps release toxins and break patterns of tension.

Sports massage:

This can be used before during and after an athletic event. The techniques used depend on the athletic and specific outcome desired. This massage helps prevent athletic injuries, relieve swelling, fatigue and muscle tension. It increases flexibility and enhances athletic performance.

Medical massage:

This is used in the medical field. Medical massage is the application of a specific treatment targeted to the specific problem the patient presents with a diagnosis and is administered after a thorough assessment or evaluation by the medical massage therapist with specific outcomes being the basis for treatment. It is a treatment formulated from a diagnosis and prescription from a physician. This is used to describe general category of massage which involve many methods such as deep tissue massage, myofascial release and trigger point therapy, osteopathic techniques and sacral techniques which are used in various medical conditions. This include decongestive therapy used for lymphedema which can be used in conjunction with the treatment of breast cancer, light massage used in pain management and palliative care, carotid sinus massage used to diagnose carotid sinus syncope and for differentiating supra ventricular tachycardia from ventricular tachycardia(Lim, Anantharaman, Teo, Goh & Tan, 1998; Ballo, Bernabo & Faraguti, 2004). A medical massage is used for chronic pain relief or injury recovery. Other benefits of medical massage therapy include; nerve compression relief, myofascial trigger points deactivation, improved circulation, ischemia prevention,

improved flexibility, decreased pain and inflammation, nervous system relaxation, aid digestion, acute headache treatment, improve posture and prevent future chronic pain conditions when trigger points and soft tissue injuries are effectively treated.

Infants/Pediatric Massage-

This is the manual manipulation of soft tissue intended to promote health and well-being of infants, children and adolescents. It is the complementary and alternative treatment that uses massage therapy to reduce pain, anxiety, loneliness and fear when children are hospitalized or diagnosed with a serious medical condition. This takes into consideration each child's physical development, cognitive development and health care needs.

Lymphatic massage- The lymphatic system is the body's plumbing system. Lymphatic massage is used for cleaning out the system. The lymphatic system is a network of slow moving vessels in the body that carries cellular waste towards the heart for filtration and removal. Lymph carries lymphocytes and other agents of immune system. Manual lymphatic massage or drainage is a technique used to gently work and stimulate the lymphatic system. This involves light, rhythmic strokes of the muscle fibre. Lymphatic massage helps remove toxins from the body and improve health. This also assists in reduction of localized swelling.

Foot massage- It is the massage technique focused on the feet. It is believed there are some specific points on the feet that correspond to different organs of the body. During foot massage, stimulation of these points causes significant reduction in pain;

helps alleviate sore soles and arches. Foot massage reduces fatigue and promotes better sleep (Han & Lee, 2011).

Hot stone massage- This massage style uses heated stones that are positioned on the body and moved around with light pressure to warm up and relax the muscles.

Prostate massage- Prostate massage is the massage or stimulation of the male prostate gland for medical purposes and or sexual stimulation. The prostate is essential for the production of semen. It can be stimulated from the anterior wall of the rectum. Prostate massage is part of the digital rectal examination routinely given to men by Urologists to screen them for prostate cancer and prostatitis. Prostate massage was once the most popular therapeutic method used to treat prostatitis. Doctors performed massage on prostatitis patients but it was found not to be enough to cure the disease most especially in acute cases because the infection can spread other parts of the body if massage is performed. Prostate massage was not shown to improve outcomes compared to antibiotics alone in recent researches (Ateya, Fayez, Hani, Zohdy, Gabbar & Shamloul, 2006).

Acupressure massage-

Acupressure is a therapy developed over 5000 years ago as an important aspect of Asian most especially Chinese medicine. Acupressure is a specific type of massage that relies on using the thumb, fingers, and palms to apply pressure to various points on the body. Acupressure is an alternative medicine technique similar to acupuncture that is based on the concept of life energy which flows

through meridians or specific channels in the body. It uses precise finger placement and pressure over specific points or same channels used in acupuncture along the body.

Acupressure massage is used to address blockages that may be causing health problems in the body. It helps to treat variety of ailments patients' experience, such as relieving stress, tension and anxiety, improving sleep, relaxing muscles and joints, soothing the pain and discomfort of a sports or other injury, reducing digestive issues, minimizing headaches and alleviating chronic pain. It also stimulates the body's circulatory, lymphatic and hormonal systems. It also helps the function of the immune system and the body's natural ability to heal itself.

Benefits of full body massage

A full body massage is that in which the massage therapist massages the whole body during a therapeutic massage lasting for at least 50 minutes. That is the amount of time needed to massage all the major areas of the body (back, shoulders, legs, feet, arms, hands, head and neck).

Full body massage is generally started from face and shoulder then moves down the body. Then turn over working the way back the body ending with the neck, shoulder and the scalp. Any of the massage techniques can be used to carry out full body massage.

Full body massage is probably the best solution to body beauty and healthy life. It is believed that it can relieve stress and cure muscle pain. It is used to treat many disorders in human body and promote healing process.

Full body massage reduces muscular pain, spasms and chronic pain of injuries. It reduces local circulation that leads to lack of oxygen and nutrients and prevents build-up of certain toxin and metabolic wastes. It is effective in improving functioning of the muscle and reducing pain that linked to various injury and chronic situation including pain in arthritis chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia and spinal cord injuries (Furlan, Imamura, Dryden & Irvin, 2008). Full body massage can also reduce pain after surgery.

Full body massage can increase flexibility in variety of ways and equally improve posture. It can loose and relax tight muscles by breaking up adhesion that can form on the tendons and ligaments around joints. It softens the connective tissues around muscles, bones, tendons and ligaments in the body (Robertshawe, 2007). Another benefit of full body massage is that it relieves stress, fatigue, tension headaches, migraine pain and improves immune system function. It reduces stress hormones such as cortisol and improves lymphatic flow that will allow immune system to work better. It can help to relieve headaches triggered by muscle tension.

Studies (Goldberg, Sullivan & Seaborne, 1992; Weerapong & Hume, 2005; Field, Diego & Hernandez-Reif, 2007) have proved that reduced nerve

pain syndrome, anxiety and improved sleep habits can be achieved through regular body massage. It can relax the muscles that clamp down on specific nerves by loosening the tissues around the problem areas. Patients are able to sleep better at night, show less stress and anxiety after receiving body massage.

Full body massage is also believed to have benefits for a variety of medical conditions which include; high blood pressure, diabetes, cancer, autoimmune, colitis, cerebral palsy, anemia, cystic fibrosis and circulatory disorders.

Conclusion

Most people feel calm and relaxed after massage session (Brummitt, 2008; Central Maryland School of Massage, 2013; Bian, 2014). Researches show that massage therapy has a lot of benefits (Field, Diego & Hernandez-Reif, 2007; Furlan et al, 2008; Han & Lee, 2011). Body massage is beneficial to all people but should be handled by trained therapists. Although some injuries may happen during or after a body massage therapy which may include; temporary pain, discomfort feeling, bruising, allergy to massage oil and swelling, if well handled it promotes well-being and healthy life which in turn promotes economic growth.

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