

A case for therapeutic massage for chronic neck pain



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Holly Jackson

The title of the article I chose is: " Five-Week Outcomes From a Dosing Trial of Therapeutic Massage for Chronic Neck Pain". It was published in the Annals of Family Medicine in the March/April issue in 2014. I chose to use this article because it relates to the chief complaint of my Wednesday client and supports massage as a viable treatment option. I recognized a need to learn more about the condition in order to be a more competent massage therapist.

In the United States, chronic neck pain is a common complaint and ranks high on the list of disabilities. Individuals who suffer often seek help from qualified massage therapists. Learning the ins and outs of the neck, including muscles, tendons, ligaments and nerves is crucial for giving a quality massage. This knowledge, paired with the proper techniques, becomes an invaluable tool in the massage therapists' tool belt for success, which will create lasting benefits for the client.

Inconclusive results prior to this study have been a result of too many variables in the techniques and infrequency of treatments. The purpose of this study was to set a specific duration of treatment, with variance on the number of treatments received, to determine if massage therapy could help ease chronic neck pain. Study subjects had to meet a rigorous list of requirements:

Adults aged 20 to 64 years with chronic nonspecific neck pain lasting at least 3 months exclud[ing] individuals whose neck pain had a pathologically identifiable cause, was complex, or was too mild, [had] potential

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contraindications for massage, [received] massage within the last 3 months, [and had not received] massage for neck pain within the last year. (Sherman, et al. 2014, p. 113)

There were 228 participants chosen and individuals were randomly assigned to one of six groups. One of the groups was the control group where the participants were put on a 'wait list'. Each of the groups contained 37 to 39 individuals. The study lasted 4 weeks, with final outcomes gathered in the fifth week over the phone by an individual who wasn't aware of group assignments. Besides the control group, which didn't receive massage, there were five groups with variances of massage ranging from 30 minutes 2 or 3 times a week to 60 minutes 1, 2, or 3 times a week. Each of the groups had specific parameters for the treatments, "which included range of motion assessment, hands-on check-in, massage applied directly to the neck, [and] addressing compensatory patterns" (Sherman, et al. 2014). The results were measured using several point systems including patient satisfaction.

The investigators found convincing results from the study groups. According to the study measurements, all of the groups showed improvement except for the control group, which did not receive massage. The measurements for neck pain intensity and neck disability index (or NDI), indicated that even though the 30-minute massage groups showed improvement in the measurements of the study, the most significant results came from the 60-minute massage groups, especially those groups receiving 3 massages per week. Studies that were conducted prior to this were inconclusive in their methods and findings. The significance of these findings cannot be

understated. Massage is a viable, verified method of treating chronic neck
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pain with considerable measures of improvement and relief of symptoms when administered with regularity.

The thoroughness of this study supports the use of therapeutic massage as a complementary treatment option. The measurements taken at the onset of the study showed that most people who suffer from chronic neck pain are not satisfied with conventional treatment options. With the finding of this study supporting therapeutic massage, the impact on the massage industry has the potential to grow exponentially. Massage has much more to offer than just feeling great, it has the ability to relieve symptoms and improve quality of life. I believe this is a perfect prescription for repeat business with satisfied clients.

References

Sherman, K., Cook, A., Wellman, R., Hawkes, R., Kahn, J., Deyo, R., & Cherkin, D. (2014).

Five-Week Outcomes From a Dosing Trial of Therapeutic Massage for Chronic Neck Pain. *Annals of Family Medicine*, 12(2), 112-120. doi: 10.1370/afm.1602