



Published Research into Indian  
Head Massage  
An abridged collection of published  
research.

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## **Massage Eases Alcohol Withdrawal Syndrome**

In subjects undergoing alcohol detoxification, massage therapy decreased the symptoms of alcohol withdrawal, reduced pulse rate and encouraged greater engagement in the treatment process, according to recent research.

'Massage Therapy Improves the Management of Alcohol Withdrawal Syndrome' was conducted by staff of Royal Brisbane Hospital Alcohol and Drug Services, Queensland University of Technology School of Psychology and Counseling, and the University of Queensland, Australia.

Twenty-five subjects were assigned to the massage group, and 25 were assigned to a control group. All 50 participants had been admitted to an alcohol and drug detoxification unit. Forty-one were males and nine were females, with an average age of 43.8 years.

Subjects in the massage group received a 15-minute shoulder, neck and head massage, fully clothed, once a day for four days. Subjects in the control group rested for 15 minutes per day for four days. Patients were discharged at the end of the fourth day or on the fifth day, after detoxification.

Outcome measures were pulse rate, respiration rate, Alcohol Withdrawal Scale scores, and subjects' responses to a questionnaire assessing the treatment process.

Results of the study showed that, as the treatment ensued, both groups had reduced scores on the Alcohol Withdrawal Scale. However, the reduction of scores in the massage group was significantly greater than those of the control group.

Pulse rate was significantly reduced in the massage group as compared to that of the control group, and respiratory function was greater in the massage group at the end of the four-day intervention.

"On a day-to-day basis, the strongest impact of massage on [Alcohol Withdrawal Scale] scores and pulse rate was significant," state the study's authors. "The initial period of detoxification is physically demanding and increasing patient comfort at this time is important."



The study also showed that people in the massage group responded to the questionnaire at a significantly higher rate than those in the control group. Eighty-six percent of subjects who reported that their meals were enjoyable were in the massage group, and 100 percent of those who reported feeling safe were in the massage group.

“The subjective experience of patients reflected those receiving massage therapy feeling more engaged in the treatment process,” state the study’s authors. “The qualitative data indicate that most of the individuals who reported feeling supported, safe and having an improved appetite were in the massage group.

“In conclusion, this study suggests that there may be a place for massage therapy in the alcohol detoxification process.”

— *Source: Royal Brisbane Hospital Alcohol and Drug Services, in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia; Queensland University of Technology School of Psychology and Counseling, in Carseldine, Queensland, Australia; and University of Queensland Department of Psychiatry, Southern Clinical Division, School of Medicine, at Princess Alexandra Hospital, in Woolloongabba, Queensland, Australia. Authors: Margaret Reader, R.N.; Ross Young, Ph.D.; and Jason P. Connor, Ph.D. Originally published in The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine, April 2005, Vol. 11, No. 2, pp. 311-313*



## **Massage for HIV-Positive Children**

Massage therapy helps preserve the immune systems of HIV-positive children who do not have access to antiretroviral medication, according to recent research.

'Massage Treatment in HIV-1 Infected Dominican Children: A Preliminary Report on the Efficacy of Massage Therapy to Preserve the Immune System in Children without Antiretroviral Medication' was conducted by staff of the University of Miami School of Medicine, Division of Disease Prevention, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Department of Medicine, and Touch Research Institutes; and staff at Robert Reid Cabral Children's Hospital in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

Fifty-four HIV-positive children, without antiretroviral medication, from Robert Reid Cabral Children's Hospital, participated in the study. The children were randomly assigned to either a massage group or a friendly visit control group.

Those in the massage group received two 20-minute massage sessions per week for 12 weeks. Those in the friendly visit control group received two 20-minute friendly visits, which involved activities such as reading, talking or playing quiet games, per week for 12 weeks.

The massage sessions consisted of moderate-pressure stroking and kneading, administered by trained nurses, with unscented oil.

Outcome measures included absolute helper (CD4/T4) and suppressor (CD8/T8) cell counts, two markers of disease progression. Blood was drawn at baseline and at the end of the 12-week study to assess lymphocyte levels. Lymphocytes are the main means of providing the body with immune capability.

By the end of the study, data were available for 24 of the 54 subjects. The results showed that the mean CD4 cell count increased in the massage group and decreased in the control group. Also, CD4 cell counts increased significantly from the start to the finish of the study for subjects in the massage group, as opposed to those in the control group.

The risk of having a 20-percent or greater decrease in CD4 cell count throughout the 12-week study was significantly higher for children in the



control group as compared with those who received massage. Lymphocyte loss, in general, was greater in the control group as compared with that of the massage group. Fifty-seven percent of the children in the control group lost 50 or more CD8 lymphocytes, whereas 10 percent of the massage group lost 50 or more CD8 lymphocytes.

“Massage therapy appears to have a positive impact on immune function in HIV+ children not receiving antiretroviral medications,” state the study’s authors. This, they conclude, “may offer hope to thousands of children worldwide without access to antiretrovirals, or who may not benefit from antiretroviral treatment.”

—Source: *University of Miami School of Medicine Division of Disease Prevention, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Department of Medicine and Touch Research Institutes; and Robert Reid Cabral Children’s Hospital, in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. Authors: Gail Shor-Posner, Ph.D.; Maria-Jose Miguez, M.D., Ph.D.; Maria Hernandez-Reif, Ph.D.; Eddy Perez-Then, M.D.; and Maryann Fletcher, Ph.D. Originally published in The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine, December 2004, Vol. 10, No. 6, pp. 1093-1095.*



## **Massage for Long-Term Pain**

Massage significantly improved self-rated health, mental energy and muscle pain in people with chronic musculoskeletal pain, according to a recent study.

'A Randomized Clinical Trial of the Treatment Effects of Massage Compared to Relaxation Tape Recordings on Diffuse Long-Term Pain' was conducted by staff at the Uppsala University Department of Public Health and Caring Sciences, in Uppsala, Sweden.

One-hundred-seventeen subjects with long-term, diffuse (spread out) musculoskeletal pain participated in the study. Each subject had pain that had lasted for at least three months and was not caused by a specific disease or condition.

Participants were randomized to either a massage or relaxation group. Subjects in the massage group received anywhere from six to 10 massages, each lasting 30 minutes. Subjects received the massages one to three times per week. Participants received an average of seven massages. One person administered all massages, and each session was adjusted to meet subjects' individual pain thresholds.

Subjects in the relaxation group listened to a relaxation tape twice a week for five weeks. The tape instructed them to tense and relax the muscle groups and breathe slowly and regularly.

Questionnaires regarding the subjects' age, gender, smoking habits, country of birth, marital status and profession were filled out before, immediately after and three months following the study. A self-rated health questionnaire and rating scales for mental energy and muscle pain were also administered at these times.

Results of the study showed that, during treatment, there was a significant improvement in self-rated health, mental energy and muscle pain for subjects in the massage group as compared to those in the relaxation group.



“For all three outcome measures, massage was significantly more effective during treatment, even after controlling for other possible factors,” state the study’s authors.

However, at the three-month follow-up evaluation these improved scores had reverted back to their initial levels.

“This lack of long-term benefits could be due to the short treatment period or treatments such as these do not address the underlying causes of pain,” state the study’s authors. “Future studies of long-term pain should include longer treatment periods and post-treatment follow-up.”

- Source: *Uppsala University Department of Public Health and Caring Sciences, in Uppsala, Sweden. Authors: Dan Hasson, Bengt Arentz, Lena Jelveus and Bo Edelstam. Originally published in Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics, 2004, Vol. 73, pp. 17-24.*