

Massage Therapy & Multiple Sclerosis

National Massage Therapy Awareness Week
October 2008



Presented by the Massage Therapist
Association of Saskatchewan, Inc.

© MTAS Inc., 2008

Researched & written by Cynthia Martin, B.A., R.M.T.



Introduction

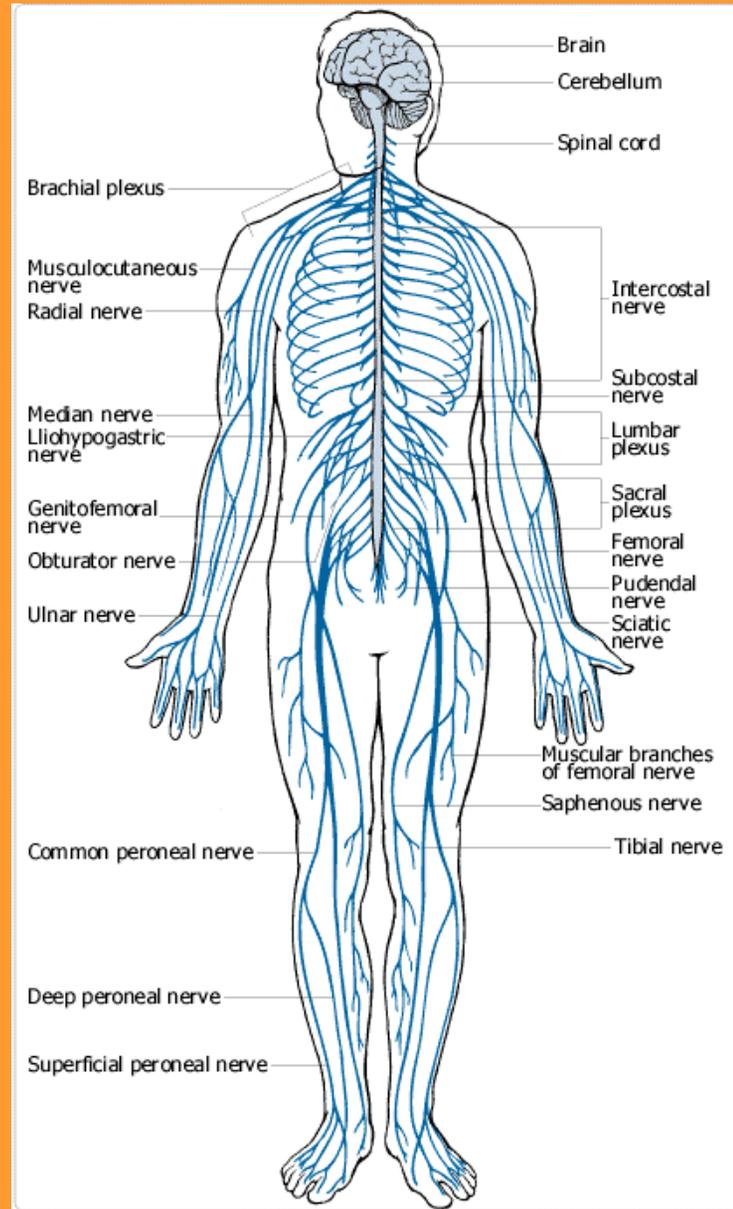
This presentation is a brief about the benefits of massage therapy for individuals living with Multiple Sclerosis.



Our Body's Nervous System:

The Central Nervous System consists of the brain and the spinal cord.

The Peripheral Nervous System are all the nerves (neurons) that branch off the spinal cord to all parts of the body.



Multiple Sclerosis Symptoms

MS affects the coating on the nerves (neurons) in the central nervous system. Damaged neurons can produce these and other symptoms:

- * *muscle weakness/atrophy (hypotonicity)*
- * *paralysis*
- * *muscle tremors*
- * *increased muscle tone (hypertonicity) & exaggerated reflexes/spasticity*
- * *joint stiffness*
- * *difficulty with walking or balance*
- * *constipation*
- * *depression/anxiety*
- * *fatigue.*



Massage Therapy

Massage therapy improves an individual's general health, speeds healing of soft tissue, muscle or joint injuries, alleviates pain, reduces symptoms of some illnesses/conditions and reduces stress.¹



¹Field, Tiffany; Hernandez-Reif, Maria; Diego, Miguel; et al. "Cortisol Decreases and Serotonin and Dopamine Increases Following Massage Therapy" (2005). *International Journal of Neuroscience*, 115,10, 1397-1413.

Massage Therapy & MS

“Although a small number of people reported experiencing negative effects from CAM² (5%), the vast majority perceived positive effects (72%).

Therapies most often sited as beneficial were **massage therapy**, acupuncture and cannabis.

The most common reasons for using CAM were to **improve health (68%) [and] to lessen the symptoms of MS (61%)**²

² Complementary & Alternative Medicine (CAM)

² Page, Stacey A., Verhoef, Marja J., Stebbins, Robert A., et al, (2003). “The Use of Complementary and Alternative Therapies by People with Multiple Sclerosis”, *Chronic Diseases in Canada*, Vol. 24 No. 2/3.



Massage Therapy Considerations:

Massage therapy results depend on a person's general health, diet, fluid intake and usual physical activity.

Duration of MS symptom relief depends upon the stage and severity of the illness.

It is recommended a MS client receive consent from his or her physician prior to receiving massage treatment.

A Registered Massage Therapist (RMT) can best determine the frequency and length of treatments to achieve results best for the client.



Treating MS symptoms:

Muscle atrophy/Paralysis (muscle weakness)

To treat muscle weakness or paralysis, the primary goal is to maintain the integrity of muscle tissue.

- ★ Massage therapy improves the circulation of oxygenated, nutrient rich blood to muscles and other tissues.
- ★ Swelling (edema) is common with atrophy or paralysis. Specific light massage techniques are designed to move fluid from the area back into the body's general circulation.



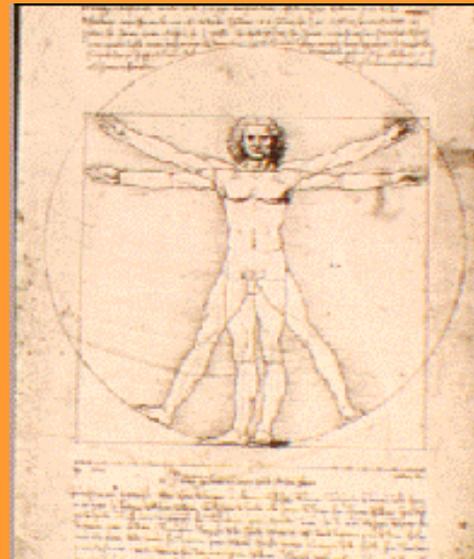
Muscle hypertonicity/Tremors/Spasticity (increased muscle tone and exaggerated reflexes)

- ★ Various massage techniques are designed to reduce abnormal muscle tone, relieve pain, increase circulation and muscle length to reduce spasm.
- ★ Other massage strokes are designed to sedate the nervous system or local peripheral nerves. This temporary sedation of nerves will reduce their exaggerated stimulation of muscle fibers



Joint stiffness

- ★ Massage to increase blood circulation in muscles surrounding a stiff joint will also create more pliable tendons, ligaments and other connective tissue. More pliable tissue means easier movement in a joint.
- ★ Particular stretches and exercises may be needed to maintain a joint's range of motion and flexibility between massage therapy appointments.



Difficulty with walking or balance

- ★ Not only do we have receptors in our body for temperature and pressure, there are sensors called proprioceptors that tell our brain the direction and speed a body part is moving. Massage therapy can stimulate proprioceptor function.
- ★ Normal or near normal muscle tone realizes better control of joints, which helps walking and balance.



Constipation

- ★ Specific, gentle abdominal massage helps encourage movement of stored gas and stools.
- ★ Reducing emotional stress and physical muscle tension also help relieve gastrointestinal problems.



Depression/Anxiety

Caring, compassionate touch has a physiological effect on neurotransmitters, stress hormones and self-esteem.

- * “The massage group [in this study] had **lower anxiety and less depressed mood** immediately following the massage sessions, and by the end of the study they had **improved self-esteem, better body image and image of disease progression, and enhanced social functioning.**”³
- * The results [of this study] suggest that massage therapy may **increase the self-efficacy of clients with MS, potentially resulting in a better overall adjustment to the disease and an improvement in psycho-emotional state.**⁴

³Hernandez-Reif, M., T. Field & H. Theakston (1998). “Multiple Sclerosis Patients Benefit from Massage Therapy”, *Journal of Bodywork and Movement Therapies*, 2, 168-174.

⁴ Finch, Paul, Becker, Pauline (2006). “Changes in the Self-efficacy of Multiple Sclerosis Clients Following Massage Therapy”, *Journal of Bodywork and Movement Therapies*, 11, 267-272.



Fatigue

- ★ Gentle, but vigorous massage strokes will stimulate peripheral nerves, helping to alleviate some fatigue.
- ★ Another approach is to use soothing massage strokes to promote relaxation and enhance the client's quality of sleep.
- ★ The cause of a client's fatigue will determine the technique used by the Registered Massage Therapist.



Conclusion:

- ★ There is no specific massage therapy protocol for people living with MS. Each individual must be assessed and treated in accordance to their unique symptom presentation.
- ★ Massage therapy will not change the course of MS.
- ★ Research has shown that massage therapy can play an effective role in maintaining one's general health.
- ★ Research also shows that many people with MS rely on massage therapy for symptom relief and stress reduction.
- ★ Caregivers of people with MS will also benefit from massage therapy.



Contraindications:

Applications of cold or heat during a massage treatment may worsen symptoms. So will an environment that is too warm.

Massage therapy is not used when severe inflammation (acute episodes) is present.

Over-stimulation of nerves might result in muscle spasms.

Areas without sensation require very light effleurage only.

Osteoporosis caused by steroid medication requires different massage techniques than usual.

Massage therapy is never used when a client has a fever or an infection.



What is a RMT?

- ★ A Registered Massage Therapist (RMT), is health professional trained to assess and treat soft tissue (ligaments, tendons, fascia), skeletal muscle and joint dysfunction.
- ★ Only members of the **Massage Therapist Association of Saskatchewan (MTAS)** are allowed to use the designation “RMT” or call themselves a Registered Massage Therapist.
- ★ “Remedial massage therapist” is not an accepted term.
- ★ “Licensed massage therapist” is not an acceptable term because the practise of massage is not currently legislated in Saskatchewan.



Receive Massage Treatment from a RMT

Currently massage therapy is not legislated in Saskatchewan. That means the public has little protection from under qualified or incompetent people providing massage.

Members of the Massage Therapist Association of Saskatchewan (MTAS) have to prove their qualifications and ensure their competency with continuing education.

Ask for a MTAS Registered Massage Therapist. If in doubt, ask to see the therapist's current MTAS membership wall certificate or wallet card.





MTAS Members Protect Clients:

- ★ Members follow a detailed Code of Ethics, Standards of Practice and must maintain client-therapist confidentiality.
- ★ Mandatory malpractice and liability insurance is a requirement of membership. Certificates in Standard First Aid & CPR. Level 'C' are also mandatory.
- ★ If there is a problem with the massage treatment you received or with the RMT, the client has a way to address it. MTAS has a well developed Complaints & Investigation system that is engaged once a client signs a form to register a complaint.



How to Find a MTAS Registered Massage Therapist:

Phone the MTAS office in Saskatoon: **384-7077**.
Ask for a list of RMTs working in or near your
community.

Go to www.saskmassagetherapy.com. There is a
tab on the home page called “Find a massage
therapist”.

Check your local Yellow Pages under “massage
therapist”. RMTs usually state they are members of
MTAS.



National Massage Therapy Awareness Week

This 'Week' was created to increase public knowledge of massage therapy and its usefulness in treating everyday aches & pains, injuries, illnesses and stress. Many people enjoy massage therapy as regular 'maintenance' for their body and mind.

National Massage Therapy Awareness Week is celebrated across Canada and in the United States.



Resources:

Finch, Paul, Becker, Pauline (2006). "Changes in the Self-efficacy of Multiple Sclerosis Clients Following Massage Therapy", *Journal of Bodywork and Movement Therapies*, 11, 267-272.

Field, Tiffany; Hernandez-Reif, Maria; Diego, Miguel; et al. "Cortisol Decreases and Serotonin and Dopamine Increases Following Massage Therapy" (2005). *International Journal of Neuroscience*, 115,10, 1397-1413.

Hernandez-Reif, M., T. Field & H. Theakston (1998). "Multiple Sclerosis Patients Benefit from Massage Therapy", *Journal of Bodywork and Movement Therapies*, 2, 168-174.

MacDonald, Gayle. *Massage for the Hospital Patient and Medically Frail Client*, Philadelphia: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, 2005.



Page, Stacey A., Verhoef, Marja J., Stebbins, Robert A., et al, (2003). "The Use of Complementary and Alternative Therapies by People with Multiple Sclerosis", *Chronic Diseases in Canada*, Vol. 24 No. 2/3.

Premkumar, Kalyani. *Pathology A to Z: A Handbook for Massage Therapists*. Calgary: VanPub Books, 1996.

Vanderbilt, Shirley, "Searching for Comfort: Alternative Therapies and Multiple Sclerosis", *Massage & Bodywork*, August-September 2004.

Werner, Ruth. *A Massage Therapist's Guide to Pathology*. 3rd ed. Philadelphia: Lippincotte Williams & Wilkins, 2005.

Yates, John. *A Physician's Guide to Therapeutic Massage*. 3rd edition. Toronto: Curties-Overzet Publications, 2004.





Massage Therapist Association of Saskatchewan, Inc.

16-1724 Quebec Avenue
Saskatoon, SK. S7K 1V9

(306) 384-7077 or (306) 384-7175 fax

mtas@sasktel.net

www.saskmassagetherapy.com

Lori Green, Executive Director
Jayne Little, Executive Assistant

