



Massage Therapy Research Roundup, Volume 4

Massage therapy is commonly used for relaxation and pain relief, in addition to a variety of health conditions such as osteoarthritis,¹ fibromyalgia,² and inflammation after exercise.³ It's important to know that massage therapy can also be an effective therapy for many aspects of mental health. In fact, recent research suggests that symptoms of stress, anxiety and depression (all associated with mental health) may be directly affected with massage therapy.

Below are some recent research findings which highlight the role of massage therapy in mental health and wellness, compiled by the American Massage Therapy Association.

Massage Therapy for the Treatment of Depression in Individuals With HIV

Research published in *The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*⁴ indicates that massage therapy can reduce symptoms of depression for individuals with HIV disease. The study lasted eight weeks, and results show massage significantly reduced the severity of depression beginning at week four and continuing at weeks six and eight. American Massage Therapy Association President Winona Bontrager says of the study, "This research suggests that regular therapeutic massage could be a useful tool in the integrated treatment of depression for patients with HIV."

Massage Therapy to Reduce Anxiety in Cancer Patients Receiving Chemotherapy

Research published in *Applied Nursing Research*⁵ shows that back massage given during chemotherapy can significantly reduce anxiety and acute fatigue. "This research demonstrates the potential value of massage therapy within the full cancer treatment spectrum, particularly during the often mentally and physically exhausting chemotherapy process," says American Massage Therapy Association President Winona Bontrager.

Massage Therapy for Reduced Anxiety and Depression in Military Veterans

Research published in *Military Medicine*⁶ reports that military veterans indicated significant reductions in ratings of anxiety, worry, depression and physical pain after massage. Analysis also suggests declining levels of tension and irritability following massage. This pilot study was a self-directed program of integrative therapies for National Guard personnel to support reintegration and resilience after return from Iraq or Afghanistan.

Massage Therapy for Nurses to Reduce Work-Related Stress

Research published in *Complementary Therapies in Clinical Practice*⁷ shows that massage for nurses during work hours can help to reduce stress and related symptoms, including headaches, shoulder tension, insomnia, fatigue, and muscle and joint pain. "This study affirms the important role massage therapy can play in the work setting, in this case to ease stress for health care providers who, in turn, can better provide optimal patient care," says American Massage Therapy Association President Winona Bontrager.

References

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6. Collinge W, Kahn J, Soltysik R. Promoting reintegration of National Guard veterans and their partners using a self-directed program of integrative therapies: a pilot study. *Military Medicine*. 2012 Dec;177(12):1477-85.
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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 findamassagetherapist.org.

AMTA Consumer Survey Facts

More Americans are incorporating massage therapy into their regular health and wellness regimens to assist with medical conditions:

- 88% of individuals view massage as being beneficial to overall health and wellness
- 88% of individuals believe that massage can be effective in reducing pain
- 75% of consumers surveyed claim that their primary reason for receiving a massage was medical (43%) or stress (32%) related
- 53% of people say their doctor has recommended they get a massage