

[IMAGE]

Massage Therapy Improves Sleep

A recent study published in the *Journal of Holistic Nursing* found that slow-stroke back massage performed on patients suffering from dementia increased their amount of sleep. According to the Alzheimer's Association, Alzheimer's is the most common type of dementia and causes problems with memory, thinking and behavior. Symptoms usually develop slowly and get worse over time, becoming severe enough to interfere with daily tasks.

As the majority of the population continues to age, the Alzheimer's Association says that 5.4 million Americans are living with this disease in 2012 and it affects one in eight older Americans. Alzheimer's disease is the sixth-leading cause of death in the United States and the only cause of death among the top 10 in the United States that cannot be prevented, cured or even slowed.

Drug therapies are common forms of treatment, but it appears this pilot study is shedding some light on a possible treatment option that could be easily administered without pharmaceutical intervention. According to the study abstract, this pilot study tested the effects of a three minute slow-stroke back massage on total minutes of nighttime sleep in people suffering from dementia that also had sleep disturbances and who were aged 65 or older and living in a nursing home.

Participants were put in either an intervention group that received the three minute slow-stroke back massage or in a control group receiving their usual bedtime care. Forty-eight hours of data was recorded and analyzed on sleep variables at baseline and after the intervention. The study results showed a 36 minute increase on total minutes of nighttime sleep in the three minute slow-stroke back massage group as compared with the control group.

Massage Therapy - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark As the population ages, few families will be left untouched by the effects and cost of caring for someone with dementia or Alzheimer's disease. It is important to find options for care that enhance the quality of life for the patients, as well as bring some relief to the family members caring for their loved ones. Massage can also be a cost-effective solution for caregivers looking for any way to increase the comfort of those suffering from this heart-breaking disease.

For more facts and figures related to dementia and Alzheimer's disease, visit the Alzheimer's Association website at www.alz.org. For more information about this study, visit the Journal of Holistic Nursing website at <http://jhn.sagepub.com/>.

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