

[IMAGE]

Massage Helps Hospital Patients Manage Pain

A recent study published in the *International Journal of Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork* examined the effects of massage therapy on pain management in an acute care setting. Previous studies have shown that high levels of stress and anxiety increase pain and may delay hospital patients recovery by limiting movement and self-care activities as well as by reducing the quality of sleep. The authors also felt it important to note that oftentimes, patients only receive touch during a (sometimes painful) medical procedure.

Other studies have shown that massage therapy is most often prescribed by physicians because it is beneficial without adverse effects. This study recruited 65 inpatients in various hospital units and requirements included a physician order for massage, as well as the ability of a patient or a family member to provide consent. The study also included feedback about the massage and participants returned a qualitative survey after they were discharged from the hospital. The massage sessions lasted between 15 and 45 minutes with most lasting 30 minutes.

Participants reported no negative effects from the massage sessions and results showed a significant reduction in overall pain and the need for pain medication, as well as an increase in emotional well-being, relaxation and the ability to sleep. More than two thirds of the study participants said they planned to continue using massage therapy as a part of their healing process.

hospital - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark According to the study, "The fact that patients throughout the various hospital units, with a wide variety of pre-massage pain levels, experienced relaxation though massage therapy indicates the true potential for massage to support healing for hospitalized patients." The study also determined that massage therapy relieved the sense of isolation the patients felt, leading the authors to suggest that because of the reported increase in emotional well-being, there is a need for compassionate touch in this type of health care setting.

The authors concluded that, "the further integration of therapies such as massage into the hospital offers the possibility to improve the experience for patients who face physical, psychological and social challenges in an unfamiliar environment." This is yet another study showing the positive benefits massage can have for people looking for a drug-free alternative to pain management.

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