

[IMAGE]

Massage Helps Relieve Workplace Pain

It doesn't really matter what type of job you have. Inevitably, whatever you do will bring you some form of stress which can manifest itself in workplace induced pain. Whether you sit at a desk all day and then suffer from a sore neck or headaches or you work in a factory or in construction and suffer from back or other joint pain, this pain is real and it can affect your life outside of work. It can cause lost time with family or even force you to take time off of work to heal. A recent study done in Canada, has found that on-site massage therapy programs made a difference in combating the high incidence of musculoskeletal injuries.

The pilot program evaluated the efficacy of on-site massage therapy on outcomes including job satisfaction and workplace stress, as measured by work culture, job demands, social interaction, control at work, as well as pain and discomfort levels, as measured by pain severity, pain interference, pain relief and massage therapy perceptions. Participants were allowed to sign up for one 20-minute massage therapy session each week. The time taken for the massage was a paid break in addition to the employee's regular break times.

Massage therapy sessions were offered for four weeks at the facility by one of four Registered Massage Therapists. Participants received up to four sessions of massage therapy over a four-week period.

Participants did not necessarily receive treatment from the same therapist in all their sessions. The massage therapy was performed with participants fully clothed, sitting prone on a massage chair. Therapists used tapotement, effleurage, petrissage, passive stretching, grade 1 or 2 joint mobilization and traction, as well as active and passive range of motion. Treatment was limited to the neck, shoulders, upper back, lower back and arms; techniques reflected those for the purposes of general relaxation.

workplace pain - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark Initial results indicate benefits in terms of pain severity, with a possible improvement in job satisfaction and morale. Massage had a significant effect on pain severity, with the greatest benefit on individuals with preexisting musculoskeletal symptoms. A long-term effect was not demonstrated. The study authors reported that six weeks after the intervention ceased, pain symptom reports became worse and decreased job satisfaction and lower morale was observed. The authors suggest the possibility that massage sessions increased participants' body and pain awareness; for example, contrast between days of massage treatment and non-treatment may have become more noticeable.

The findings of this research provide exciting implications for the field of massage therapy. First, this pilot research supports the efficacy of alternative workplace programs employing the use of massage therapy to benefit healthcare workers. Targeting individuals, such as those with preexisting musculoskeletal signs and symptoms are most likely to benefit from a massage therapy workplace program. Combining a massage therapy program with other health and safety programs is strongly recommended by the study authors. Second, though much of the literature has previously focused on patient massage, implications of this work suggest that massage therapists may have a role in the healthcare environment to provide services to healthcare providers who provide patient care. With musculoskeletal injuries, lost days of work and morale issues, massage therapy may be just the wellness intervention needed to support this large workforce.

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