



The Value of Medical Massage in Neurological Rehabilitation

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INTRODUCTION

The results of two surveys conducted after the completion of two medical massage internships at the Institute of Lavigny, the neurological rehabilitation center in Lavigny, Switzerland, allowed for the creation of a 0.8 FTE medical massage position while also continuing the internship position. This research conducted in 2009 and 2018 examined the added value of medical massage as perceived by (para) medical professionals.

OBJECTIVES

To get an understanding of how (para) medical professionals working with patients in neurological rehabilitation view the added value of medical massage for their patients, for the efficacy of treatment and the overall outcome of the therapeutic approach.

METHODS

Survey

55 surveys consisting of 8-questions were distributed to (para) medical staff following a 6-month medical massage internship in 2009 and 2018. Therapeutic staff included neurologists, neuropsychologists, physical therapists, occupational therapists, nurses, speech pathologists and dietitians.

Treatments

The medical massage treatments included manual lymphatic drainage, lymphatic bandaging, classical massage, connective tissue massage and plantar reflexology. Patients were selected for treatment by the neurologist and sessions lasted 60 minutes, 1–4 times per week for 2–20 weeks.

Feedback

The survey requested feedback on department, the physical and psychological effectiveness of medical massage as recounted by the patient, the added value of medical massage as observed by the (para) medical staff in working with the patient and the opinion of the (para) medical staff regarding the benefit of having a medical massage therapist employed as part of the inter-professional rehabilitation or hospital teams.

RESULTS

The over all survey response rate was 60% in 2009 and 47% in 2018.

Question 1. In which department do you work?

- Neurology (2009: 12%, 2018: 4%)
- Neuropsychology (2009: 6%, 2018: 19%)
- Physical Therapy (2009: 18%, 2018: 19%)
- Occupational Therapy (2009: 18%, 2018: 23%)
- Nursing (2009: 39%, 2018: 12%)
- Speech Pathology (2009: 3%, 2018: 19%)
- Nutrition (2018: 4%)
- Liaison (2009: 3%)

Question 2. Did you work with the patients that received medical massage?

Yes (2009: 100%, 2018: 100%) | No (2009: 0%, 2018: 0%)

Question 3. In your (non)-verbal communication with the patients, did they indicate that they benefited from the massages?

Yes (2009: 90%, 2018: 92%) | No (2009: 3%, 2018: 3%)

Question 4. If you responded “yes” to question 3, could you describe how the patients expressed themselves on the subject?

Physical benefit (2009: 75%, 2018: 69%) | Psychological benefit (2009: 66%, 2018: 61%)

Question 5. Have you found that the massages were beneficial to the patients?

Yes (2009: 90%, 2018: 92%) | No (2009: 3%, 2018: 3%)

Question 6. Did you find the massages given to patients prior to your work with them to be beneficial to your work with those patients?

Yes (2009: 75%, 2018: 50%) | No (2009: 12%, 2018: 19%)

Question 7. Do you think it would benefit hospitals or rehabilitation centers to have a medical masseu(r)se?

Yes (2009: 93%, 2018: 88%) | No (2009: 0%, 2018: 0%)

Question 8. Open-ended to allow for additional questions or remarks.

POSITIVE FINDINGS

- Passive therapy required no active performance, allowing physical and mental relaxation
- Increased articular range of motion after massage, facilitating active therapy
- Muscle relaxation and pain reduction
- Reduced edema
- Improved mood
- Reduced intake of certain pain medications
- Seen as a privileged moment by the patient
- Stimulated the patient’s morale
- Linking cervical work and swallowing/voice
- Better patient participation in active therapy following massage

NEGATIVE FINDINGS

- Not instead of but in addition to a physical therapist
- Patients feel very tired after a massage, but appreciated the relaxation
- Planning should not be prior to personal care
- Unable to attribute the benefit of massage versus the other therapies

CONCLUSION

Medical massage was considered an added value to the neurological rehabilitation program by the Institute of Lavigny’s (para) medical staff, and a position has been created effective September 2019.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This survey could be used in all hospitals and rehabilitation centers where medical massage interns and professionals are currently working, to obtain input from a larger sample of practitioners from different medical fields. Positive findings could then be presented to the administration of these institutions in order to encourage the addition of medical massage professionals to existing therapeutic staff.



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