Background & Significance

- Few NIH funded studies give community licensed massage therapists (LMTs) the opportunity to become study personnel.
- A move toward effectiveness research and examining massage therapy as practiced in the “real world” motivated researchers with the Department of Family of Community Medicine at the University of Kentucky to develop a novel study design that utilized community LMTs.

Objectives

- Primary Study Objective: Determine whether health related outcomes for chronic low back pain (CLBP) improve when patients are referred from primary care to select CAM modalities.
- Massage Practice Driven & Poster Objectives
  - Identify challenges and solutions to recruiting and retaining ample community LMTs.
  - Develop a real world, practice informed clinical massage therapy (CMT) protocol.
  - Identify challenges and solutions for utilizing LMT intake and treatment notes as data.
  - Determine the extent to which community LMTs comply to rigorous research methodology in their clinical practice as study personnel.

LMT Recruitment & Retention

Recruitment and retention challenges (Table 1) were magnified in rural counties due to a smaller pool of therapists in the area.

Table 1. LMT Recruitment & Retention Challenges and Solutions

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<th>Challenge</th>
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| Initial contact/gatekeeping to LMTs with opportunity details | Utilizing previous connections with eligible LMTs.
| Unwillingness to participate due to lack of experience in study procedures | Inviting prominent LMT community members.
| Unwillingness to participate due to lack of interest | Personal invitations from human study personnel.
| Inability to participate due to location of practice | Utilizing previous connections with eligible LMTs.
| Treatment limitations | Removing clients with prior experience to study procedures.
| Logistical timing issues that caused long periods of time to pass from initial LMT recruitment to actual participation | Additional incentives provided to eligible LMTs to ensure timely participation.

LMT Compliance and Conclusion

- The design of CMT data collection forms utilized in the study was adapted from materials employed in similar massage therapy / low back pain research.
- Qualitative style of CMT treatment notes pose challenging data issues.
- Variables developed from CMT data collection forms and SOAP notes include:
  - Pain progression (e.g., constant, alternating, progressive)
  - Sleep position (e.g., flat back, side, stomach, alternating)
  - Activities that increase and activities that decrease pain.
  - Medical history (e.g., obesity, scoliosis, MVA, depression)
- Qualitative research methodology utilized for coding, analyzing, and reporting data collected on CLBP study participants by LMTs.

Figure 2. Per Participant Treatment (Tx) Utilization Percentages

Conclusion: When challenges in recruitment, retention, and protocol are met, community LMTs are valuable study personnel for practice based, effectiveness, CMT research. Presentated methodology and design strategies should serve as models for future research reflecting real world CMT.