



The Effect of Massage Therapy Depends on the Context

Stefan Nilsson^{1*}

¹School of Health Sciences, Borås University, SE-501 90 Borås, Sweden

ARTICLE INFO

Article type:
Letter

Article history:
Received: 09 Oct 2012
Accepted: 17 Oct 2012

Keywords:
Musculoskeletal Manipulations
Patient Care Management

► Please cite this paper as:

Nilsson S. The Effect of Massage Therapy Depends on the Context. *Nurs Midwifery Stud.* 2012;1(2):107-8. DOI: 10.5812/nms.8516

Published by Kowsar Corp, 2012. cc 3.0.

Dear Editor,

The article The Effects of Massage Therapy by the Patient's Relative on Vital Signs of Males Admitted in Critical Care Unit written by Adib-Hajbaghery et al. (1) contributes important information to the field of complementary treatment methods. Most complementary treatment methods, such as massage therapy, are frequently recommended in nursing literature. There is still a lack of evidence, specially, about how and when these methods should be used in clinical practice. For example, my colleagues and I investigated the experience of massage therapy in children with cerebral palsy (2). The results demonstrated that these children did not always enjoy the intervention and their heart rate did not decrease compared with that of the control group. Despite the fact that this was a pilot study, which means that the results should not be taken in high evidence, the results indicated an important hypothesis. This hypothesis suggests that the effect of massage therapy probably depends on the context, which means that massage therapy does not work in every context. In fact, the opposite is true, and nurses should handle massage therapy with care because this intervention has both positive and negative

effects. Nurses should decide carefully, for example, who should give the massage therapy to the patient. In the pilot study, a massage therapist gave the massage therapy to the child, and this was also the case when Henricsson et al. (3) investigated a form of massage therapy, i.e. tactile touch, in adults who were treated in an intensive care unit. The results of that study was similar to that of the pilot study, which means that it did not show significant differences for heart rate or systolic blood pressure for patients in the intervention group. The opposite was shown in the study by Adib-Hajbaghery et al. (1) in which heart rate and systolic blood pressure decreased significantly in the intervention group. There are several differences between the designs of these studies, such as the time of day the massage therapy was carried out. However, one of the main differences between the studies was that in the one by Adib-Hajbaghery et al. (1), relatives gave the massage therapy while Henricsson et al. (3) used massage therapists for this purpose. Patients in hospital, especially when they are unable to protest, are vulnerable, and it is important not to violate their integrity. In these circumstances, the choice of massage therapist probably influences the effect of the massage therapy. A person

* Corresponding author: Stefan Nilsson, School of Health Sciences, Borås University, SE-501 90 Borås, Sweden. Tel: +46-738538951, Fax: +46-334354010, E-mail: stefan_r.nilsson@hb.se

DOI: 10.5812/nms.8516

© 2012 Kashan University of Medical Sciences; Published by Kowsar Corp.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

who is familiar to the patient, i.e. a relative, could probably give better outcomes. More research is needed, specially, to confirm whether relatives or massage therapists should give the massage therapy to the patient. This will probably still depends on the context, and it is not clear whether all contexts or patients need relatives to give the massage therapy. In any case, nurses will need to be aware that massage therapy needs both indications and contra-indications. Finally, more studies are needed to evaluate whether relatives should give the massage therapy to the patients.

Financial Disclosure

None declared.

References

1. Adib-Hajbaghery M, Abasi A, Rajabi-Beheshtabad R, Azizi-Fini I. The Effects of Massage Therapy by the Patient's Relative on Vital Signs of Males Admitted in Critical Care Unit. *Nurs Midwifery Stud.* 2012;**1**(1):16-21.
2. Nilsson S, Johansson G, Enskar K, Himmelmann K. Massage therapy in post-operative rehabilitation of children and adolescents with cerebral palsy - a pilot study. *Complement Ther Clin Pract.* 2011;**17**(3):127-31.
3. Henricson M, Ersson A, Maatta S, Segesten K, Berglund AL. The outcome of tactile touch on stress parameters in intensive care: a randomized controlled trial. *Complement Ther Clin Pract.* 2008;**14**(4):244-54.