

Therapeutic Massage: Role in Homoeopathic Treatment – A Review

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Abstract

Homoeopathy is a therapeutic system follows Similia similibus curentur i.e. like is cured by likes. Here substances are used as curative agents which are applied by above mentioned principle. Massage is used in homoeopathy as an accessory method in convalescent stage after a long chronic sufferer cured from his disease. Massage brings a speedy recovery of lost flesh, weakness of digestion & loss of sleep, in subjects who are already cured by homoeopathic medication.

Key words: *Organon of Medicine, Therapeutic massage, Chronic disease, Homoeopathic massage, Mesmerism*

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Introduction

The term *massage* is derived from the Arabic word *mass*, meaning "to press." It involves the skilled manipulation of the body's soft tissues using the hands to influence the nervous, muscular, and circulatory systems. This technique helps enhance or restore bodily function. Massage serves as a natural method for generating energy and promoting the recovery of injured areas, whether localized or widespread. Mastery of massage requires both mental focus and manual skill, which are developed through practice.

Effects of Massage

Mechanical Effects

- Helps remove dead skin cells.

- Clears blockages in sweat glands, hair follicles, and sebaceous glands, improving their function.
- Enhances the skin's natural lubrication.
- Generates warmth in the treated area.
- Assists in the treatment of scar tissue and adhesions.
- Supports and maintains the mobility of newly formed skin tissue.
- When applied over the lungs, it helps loosen mucus stuck in the bronchial passages.
- Stimulates increased blood flow (hyperaemia) through histamine release, which improves tissue flexibility, boosts parasympathetic activity, relaxes muscle tone, and helps reduce swelling (edema).

Physiological Effects

Circulatory System

- Skin color changes occur as a result of enhanced blood circulation, increased blood flow velocity, and greater blood viscosity.
- Massage can influence blood pressure, heart rate, skin temperature, electrical conductivity of the skin, and oxygen consumption.
- It also stimulates the release of histamine from mast cells, basophils, and platelets, triggering the "triple response":
 - ✓ Dilation of small blood vessels
 - ✓ A red flush or flare around the treated area
 - ✓ Mild swelling or puffiness

Nervous System

- Spinal motor neuron excitability is lowered due to a decrease in the Hoffman reflex, indicating reduced activity in spinal reflex pathways.
- Massage has an inhibitory effect on alpha motor neuron excitability, although this effect is temporary and doesn't persist after treatment.
- It promotes the release of endorphins, which helps in alleviating chronic pain.

Musculo-Skeletal System

- Influences muscle fatigue, helping to reduce it.
- Alters the level of muscle tone, either relaxing or stimulating the muscles depending on the technique used.

Psychological Effects

- Has a beneficial impact on psychological well-being.
- Enhances feelings of relaxation and restfulness.
- Lowers anxiety levels and reduces the production of stress hormones.
- Boosts immunoglobulin A levels, supporting a stronger immune system.
- Aids in alleviating depression and managing adjustment disorders.

- Contributes to better pain management and increases mental energy.
- Leads to improved sleep quality and more restful sleep.

Contraindications

Absolute contraindications

- Presence of tissue inflammation or cancer (malignancy)
- Circulatory issues, such as a tendency to bleed easily
- Impaired or abnormal sensation in the area
- Skin conditions or infections
- Early-stage bruising
- Unhealed scars or open wounds
- Areas near a recent bone fracture
- Active inflammation or tubercular infection affecting joints or soft tissues
- History or suspicion of deep vein thrombosis (DVT)
- Burn injuries
- Severe or advanced osteoporosis

Relative contraindications

- Elderly individuals
- People with delicate or sensitive skin
- Those in the initial stages of osteoporosis
- Children
- Adults with cognitive and/or physical impairments
- Individuals recovering from infections or bone-related conditions

Treatment Planning

Patient examination involves assessing both subjective and objective history, including the onset, characteristics, and intensity of symptoms, as well as factors that worsen or relieve them. It also includes evaluating clinical signs, posture, range of motion, activity levels, muscle strength, balance, coordination, gait, and any muscular issues.

Determine indications

- The decision to perform massage and choose specific techniques is made based on the patient's examination.
- Careful observation and palpation are essential.
- Assess the quality of tissue movement—for example, use kneading or lifting techniques for loss of elasticity, and skin rolling for stiffness.

Outcome measures include: heart rate, blood pressure, respiratory rate, electromyography (EMG), mood and anxiety levels, pain intensity, lung vital capacity, joint range of motion, muscle spasms, swelling, edema, and proprioception.

Palpation & Skills

- Palpation must be consistent, dependable, and accurate.
- Both the patient's and physiotherapist's positioning should be carefully considered to ensure the hands are precise, sensitive, and correctly assessing the intended areas.
- Make well-informed decisions about when massage should or should not be performed.

Preparation Before Massage

- Ensure all body parts to be treated are easily accessible.
- Be ready to adjust the patient's position smoothly if necessary.

Self-Preparation of the Therapist

- Maintain good personal hygiene, neat appearance, and well-groomed nails.
- Wear comfortable, protective clothing that allows freedom of movement and is easy to wash.
- Secure long hair and remove jewelry.
- Take good care of your hands.

- Practice strict cleanliness by washing hands before and after treatment to prevent infection.
- Warm your hands prior to contact.
- Maintain good range of motion in your forearm and arm, including thumb abduction and extension, wrist flexion and extension, and forearm pronation and supination.

Hand Exercises: Include stretching and abduction of fingers, prayer pose, and reverse prayer pose.

Hand Relaxation

- Keep full contact with the patient, molding your hands to their body shape.
- Hands should be naturally relaxed with thumbs and fingers slightly flexed and spaced.
- Relax the entire arm, especially for certain manipulations.
- Practice relaxation techniques, such as reciprocal relaxation, to enable coordinated and fatigue-free movements without physical strain.

Environment Setup

- Use a quiet, warm, and well-ventilated room.
- Provide padded, adjustable couches or chairs with washable covers.
- Have towels to cover untreated areas, pillows for support, and disposable paper sheets available.

Contact Medium

- Use substances that allow smooth hand movement and reduce friction, such as talcum or corn starch powder, pure lanoline, liquid oils (vegetable oils, liquid paraffin), creams, water-based lubricants, or soap and water.
- Always check for allergic reactions before use, as some contact media can cause mild to severe allergies

Patient Preparation

- Instruct the patient to undress the area being treated and remove all jewelry.
- Areas commonly treated include:
 - Upper limb (neck to fingers)
 - Lower limb (groin to toe)
 - Back (head to buttocks)
 - Neck (head to T12 vertebra)
 - Face (hairline to just below the clavicle)
- Keep the patient warm and comfortable using pillows for support.

Examination of the Area

- Assess the skin's condition—whether it is dry, oily, wet, or hairy—and check for bruises, abrasions, or cuts.
- Evaluate the texture and feel of the tissue.

Precautions for Ticklish Patients

- Maintain firm, continuous hand contact; avoid lifting your hands as this can cause tickling.
- Avoid using only fingers during contact, as light touches tend to provoke ticklish responses.
- Perform manipulations at the deepest level the patient can tolerate to minimize tickling sensations.

Massage in Homoeopathy

In homoeopathy massage is an auxiliary therapeutic procedure which is used in convalescence stage after recovery from chronic disease. As per Hahnemann it should be given by good-natured vigorous person & massage is to be applied on chronic invalids, who, though cured, still suffers from loss of flesh, weakness of digestion and lack of sleep due to slow convalescence. As we have discussed above Hahnemann given the same caution as it is not to be applied on hypersensitive patients. Hahnemann also stated that

mesmeric influence (animal magnetic influence by which a vigorous person infuses his energy into a debilitated patient) of the procedure is the chief feature which helps in recovery of the patients.

There is another procedure mentioned by Hahnemann in 5th edition of Organon of medicine as “Rubbing-in” method where medicinal preparation is rubbed in patients’ sensitive part of skin, thus the medicinal power is communicating to the whole organism. But he also mentioned, in Homoeopathy, we hardly ever require for its cures the rubbing-in of any medication.

Conclusion

In Homoeopathy massage is an important therapeutic method which helps in speedy recovery after the patient cured by homoeopathic medicine.

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