Chapter 10
Adaptive Massage

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Introduction

• Standard massage routines are designed for the average client’s needs
• Some clients will have physical, emotional, and health-related challenges requiring adaptation of the massage or positioning

Introduction

• Most important: view all clients as people
• Special needs are an important, but secondary, consideration
• Regard all injuries and conditions with gentleness, kindness, and acceptance

Communication of Special Needs

• Clients may indicate their need for adaptive measures when their appointment is scheduled
• If possible, research condition ahead of time
• Ask client questions during interview
• Boundaries (professionalism, confidentiality) should remain consistent for all clients

Amputations

• Obtain consent during interview to massage the stump
• Asking for details about surgical procedure (e.g., whether muscle was wrapped around stump) helps locate trigger points
• Ask client whether stump is sensitive or numb
Amputations: Phantom Limb Sensation
- Definition: feeling pain and other sensations in the amputated limb
- Also known as phantom limb pain
- Cause is complex—involves both peripheral and central nervous systems
- Calming effects of massage generally help clients with phantom limb pain

Amputations: Prosthetic Appliances
- Some clients may want to remove prosthetics; others may not
- Look out for chafing or friction wounds at site of prosthesis—avoid inflamed areas, broken skin, or open wounds during massage

Central Venous Catheter
- Also called a central line
- Flexible tube inserted into a large vein and left in place for an extended period
- Used for dialysis, blood withdrawal, chemotherapy, or medications

Central Venous Catheter
- Use of catheter makes prone position difficult or impossible—use side-lying position, bolsters, pillows, etc.
- Avoid tension or excessive movement near catheter
- Do not allow massage lubricant to come in contact with catheter dressing or sutures

ICDs
- ICD: implantable cardioverter defibrillator
- Used to treat abnormal heart rates
- Delivers electrical shock to restore normal heart rate and rhythm
- Massage considerations:
  - Massage contraindicated once device discharges
  - Other modifications listed under pacemaker

Pacemaker Users
- Pacemaker is an electrical device to help client regulate heartbeat
- Usually inserted near the pectoralis major muscle
Pacemaker Users

- Massage considerations:
  - Main concern is whether incision has healed; if so, apply gentle effleurage
  - Avoid vigorous massage on pectoral region
  - Pacemaker wires (leads) may run over clavicle and down into chest cavity; avoid moving client’s arm over head when mobilizing shoulder joint because this may disturb connections

Stent

- Small, expandable, lattice-shaped metal tube or hollow perforated tube
- Creates an increase in vessel duct diameter
- If located superficially, local massage is contraindicated
- If in deep vessel or duct, use only light pressure over or near site

Breast Implants or Large Breasts

- Main issue—comfort while lying prone
- Offer rolled towel or pillow for support under, above, or between breasts
- Many clients prefer support from both above and below
- Adjust face rest if needed

Massaging Women with Large Breasts

- It can be difficult to access chest muscles of large-chested women in the supine position
- Ask client to use back of her hand to retract breast tissue medially

Massaging Women with Large Breasts

- Alternative—massage with client in side-lying position

Colostomy or Ileostomy

- Colostomy—incision in the colon to provide an opening between the bowel and the abdominal wall
- Ileostomy—similar to colostomy; incision is in the small intestine
- Stoma—section of colon wall attached to the abdominal wall
- A bag is attached to the opening to collect fecal material
Colostomy or Ileostomy
- Recommend that client not eat for two hours before massage—decreases bowel motility
- Suggest that client empty bag before massage begins
- Use side-lying position to accommodate opening and bag
- Do not apply lubricant on or near bag opening—interferes with adhesive

Chronic Illness
- Definition: A condition of the body for which no cure is known
- Massage therapy can reduce suffering and increase comfort
- Obtain medical clearance; apply massage more gently, more frequently, and for shorter periods than with other clients

Terminal Illness
- Definition: A condition in which the client is expected to die within a time frame, usually 6 months
- Goal of the massage therapy session is to improve quality of life
- Obtain medical clearance; apply massage more gently, more frequently, and for shorter periods than with other clients

End-of-Life Massage
- Massage can reduce suffering and increase comfort
- Use gentle pressure; treatments should be more frequent but shorter
- If visiting client in hospice or at home, client may prefer to be massaged in her bed

End-of-Life Massage
- In hospital, check with medical staff for any helpful information
- Work around catheters, equipment, etc.
- When making choice to work with a terminally ill patient, commit to keep patient as client until his or her death

Cancer
- Once viewed as terminal illness—focus was length of time patient had to live
- With new technologies and medications, now often viewed as chronic condition—allows greater focus on quality of life
Cancer
• Characterized by uncontrollable growth of abnormal cells that form a neoplasm or tumor
• A tumor is either a benign tumor or cancerous
• A cancerous tumor will often metastasize, or spread its cells to other parts of the body

Types of Cancer
• Cancers are named for the type of tissue from which they are derived
  – Carcinoma: arises from epithelial tissue
  – Melanoma: grow from melanocytes
  – Sarcoma: develops from muscle cells or connective tissue
  – Leukemia: rapid growth of abnormal white blood cells
  – Lymphoma: arises from lymphatic tissue

Cancer and Massage
• Massage is one option to help cancer patients live more active, pain-free lives
• American Cancer Society advocates massage to help and comfort patients, not to treat the cancer itself
• As safe as activities of daily living, hot bath, or mild exercise

Cancer Treatments
• Surgery—removes cancerous tissue and nearby lymph nodes
  – Massage to promote lymph flow
• Radiation therapy—uses radiation to eradicate cancer cells
  – Massage gently, avoid lubricant on treatment area, use cool towels on areas that burn or itch

Cancer Treatments
• Chemotherapy—drugs used to slow or stop growth of cancer cells
  – Client may be extremely fatigued; assist client on and off massage table if needed

Cancer Guidelines for Therapist
• Obtain medical consent first
• Be attentive about pressure, client position and comfort, and areas to avoid
  – Use gentle pressure or modalities that use very little pressure
• Inquire about client health at the start of every session
Cancer Guidelines for Therapist

- Use a side-lying position if client cannot lie prone
- Be cautious of pressure, traction, and ROM activities if cancer has spread to bone
- Avoid IV lines, catheters, surgical wounds, radiation burns, known tumor sites

Clients Infected with HIV or Living with AIDS

- HIV—Human Immunodeficiency Virus
  - Virus that causes AIDS
  - Virus affect T-lymphocytes or T-cells
- AIDS—Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
- Patients who have AIDS
  - Are infected with HIV
  - Have three or more opportunistic infections, and/or T-cell count below 200

Clients Infected with HIV or Living with AIDS

- Three elements required for transmission of HIV:
  - Virus must be in proper environment to survive (body fluid)
  - Virus must be in sufficient quantity to survive (found in blood, semen, vaginal secretions, breast milk)
  - Virus must have a port of entry

Clients Infected with HIV or Living with AIDS

- Massage considerations:
  - Inquire about areas to be avoided (e.g., sites of blood work)
  - Assess general vitality and other conditions (e.g., bedridden client might have reduced bone density) that might limit Swedish gymnastics or ROM

Clients Infected with HIV or Living with AIDS

- No known cases of HIV transfer from client to massage therapist while performing massage have been reported
- Clients with HIV are unusually susceptible to infection—maintain sanitation and cleanliness (as with all clients)
Geriatric Clients

• Definition: Someone who is 70 years of age or older
• Many changes occur as we age: examples include decreased reflexes, sight, and hearing; decreased muscle and bone strength; atherosclerosis
• Condition varies widely from person to person

Geriatric Clients

• Assess client during premassage interview; ensure she can hear and understand you
• Make sure client feels comfortable and safe
• Guard against chilling during massage by using blanket and/or heater

Geriatric Clients

• When visiting client at home, knock before entering room
• Put objects back in their places
• Be patient
• Client may be lonely or depressed—be attentive and sensitive to emotional needs

Massaging Geriatric Clients

• Avoid deep work unless ordered by physician
• Massage for short periods to avoid tiring client
• Reduce treatment time and pressure to minimize bruising
• Assist client to sitting or standing position—blood pressure may drop

Pediatric Clients

• Defined as clients 3–18 years old
• May be accompanied by anxious parents—child often has injury or illness
• Explain procedures to both child and parent; obtain informed consent from parent or guardian (by law)

Pediatric Clients

• Consider requesting that parent remain in room when massaging young client, especially near sensitive areas
• Massage sessions for young children are often only 30 to 45 minutes
• Spend extra time establishing rapport
Large Clients
• Clients usually have history of verbal abuse and blame about weight—therapist should be aware of this and avoid badgering the client
• Adipose (fat) tissue contains many blood vessels and is susceptible to bruising—avoid deep work of fatty tissue

Hearing Impaired Clients
• Allow extra time for premassage interview
• Make eye contact whenever possible—sign of attention
• Use gentle tapping and gestures as needed
• When repeating a sentence the client did not understand, rephrase the information

Hearing Impaired Clients
• Find out early whether client reads lips
• Face client, maintain eye contact, speak clearly and distinctly
• Keep view of your face unobstructed
• Use facial and hand gestures to help convey meaning

Speech Difficulties
• Ask client to repeat anything you do not understand
• Ask whether any accommodations can be made on his behalf
• If client speaks a language you do not understand, ask whether he can bring someone to interpret
Visually Impaired Clients
- During premassage interview, allow extra time to give and receive information
- Ask client to explain her impairment and what assistance (if any) is needed
- Keep massage facilities free of barriers and clutter

Visually Impaired Clients
- Announce presence before entering room; speak in normal tone of voice
- Address client by name and state your name
- To assist client, stand in front or to left of client

Visually Impaired Clients
- Describe surroundings to client (e.g., “The massage table is at two o’clock.”)
- Be sure client knows you are there before beginning touch; maintain contact during massage as much as possible

Contact Lens Users
- Many clients remove lenses before massage—have contact lens solution available
- If user keeps contacts in, show him how to adjust face rest cover to avoid eye compression

Contact Lens Users
- While client is supine, avoid massage near or over eyes
- Moving face cushion to side of frame reduces eye compression of contact users

Spinal Abnormalities
- Kyphosis—humpback condition
- Lordosis—swayback condition
- Scoliosis—lateral spine distortion
**Kyphosis**

- Clients may be uncomfortable lying in the prone position
- Place a cushion under the clavicles; adjust face rest to level above table

**Lordosis**

- Common in clients who are overweight or have flaccid abdominal muscles
- Place pillow under anterior superior iliac spine (ASIS) when client is in prone position
- Use bolster under ankles; use pillows to correct externally rotated femurs

**Scoliosis**

- Abnormal curve is in thoracic position; ribs and hips are in distorted positions
- Offer client pillows and allow her to position them until she feels supported and comfortable

**Clients in Wheelchairs**

- If massage studio is not in an accessible building, perform the massage off-site
- Sit or kneel when speaking to client—puts you at his eye level
- Inquire about the client’s limitations—do not make assumptions

**Clients in Wheelchairs**

- Ask client the reason for his wheelchair use
- Client may choose to be massaged in wheelchair; use pillows or desk topper
- Be sure wheelchair brakes are locked before beginning massage

- If client prefers to be massaged on table, follow his instructions on how best to help him transfer from chair to table
- Ask client for feedback during massage
- Trigger points may be located in shoulders and chest
Substance Abuse and Drug Addiction

- Massage can assist clients with stress during withdrawal
- Massage can also provide benefits during recidivism (relapse)
- Most substance abuse clients need professional counseling; the therapist can provide moral support and acceptance

Sexual Abuse

- Crosses all boundaries of gender, orientation, age, and income
- Most perpetrators are family members, friends, or acquaintances (e.g., date rape)
- Client may need time to establish trust with therapist before massage can be performed

Sexual Abuse

- Many survivors adopt extreme behaviors, e.g., compulsive eating, compulsive exercise, drug or alcohol abuse
- Sexual behavior may also be extreme: survivor may be fearful or promiscuous

Sexual Abuse

- Therapist must be a good role model for appropriate sexual boundaries
- If therapist has any concerns about his/her own boundaries or is attracted to the client, refer client to another therapist

Sexual Abuse

- Avoid triggering memories and behaviors:
  - Establish calm and nurturing environment
  - Ask the client if he knows what his triggers are
  - Common triggers: perfume scents, touch in a particular area, body positions, certain music or colors
  - Massage itself may act as a trigger—reassure client that he or she is in control of session
  - Allow client to set boundaries: draping, areas for massage, speed and depth of massage

Sexual Abuse

- State-dependent memory
  - Some aspect of massage (e.g., position or touch) may cause client’s body to “remember” abuse
  - Repressed memories become conscious
Sexual Abuse

- Disassociation
  - Coping mechanism: person “leaves the body,” does not feel, or believes abuse is happening to someone else
  - Can occur during massage if client recalls abuse
  - Signs: client unresponsive, a distant look in the eyes, shaking, disorientation, shift in breathing
  - Stop massage if client disassociates; further touch can be traumatizing

Emotional Release During Massage

- Most often seen as tears or crying; can include shaking, twitching, or thrashing
- Clients in counseling are more likely to experience releases
- If client is aware this might occur, explain steps you will take ahead of time

Emotional Release During Massage

- Process for therapist:
  - Approach release with acceptance
  - Discontinue massage and make touch contact in a neutral area
  - Do not leave room unless client requests it

Emotional Release During Massage

- Process for therapist (cont’d.):
  - Do not offer tissues too quickly
  - Remind client she is safe; ask if she wants a break or other comfort measure
  - Be accepting of the response; do not encourage or repress

Emotional Release During Massage

- Responding to your client after the emotional release:
  - If asked, mirror back what you observed
  - Do not analyze; offer your understanding of state-dependent memory
  - Provide space for client to be alone (or to phone counselor) if requested
Emotional Release During Massage

- Responding to your client after the emotional release (cont’d.):
  - When appropriate, refer client to qualified mental health professional
  - If release is very uncomfortable for therapist to deal with, speak to a counselor, fellow therapist, or peer support group

Summary

- Massage is an adaptable medium of therapy, with endless variation
- This flexibility enables the therapist to accommodate many special needs
- Client respect and communication are the most important aspects to adaptive massage