Chapter 27
Seated Massage

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Introduction
- Seated massage is also called chair massage
- David Palmer developed the first massage chair in 1986 and coined the phrase “on-site massage” still used today
- Palmer introduced seated massage to workplace in 1980s
- Palmer adapted Japanese system of amma to be performed on chair

Introduction
- Seated techniques have made massage more accessible to general public
- Sessions typically short and affordable
- Client does not disrobe
- Lubricant not used

How to Select a Massage Chair
- Different features appeal to different people
- Should be lightweight and quick to set up and take down
- Should be able to adjust to variety of body styles

Reasons for Using the Chair
- Seated massage can be used as promotional tool
- Can be done on-site or in therapist’s office
- Can be used for short treatments of upper body
- Often used as a “stress-buster” break

Sanitization and Hygiene
- Clients notice and appreciate attention to clean equipment and environment
- Hand washing with water may not be possible; use antimicrobial towelettes
Sanitization and Hygiene

- Wipe face support, arm rest, and chest pad of chair between clients
- Keep fingernails short and clean
- Use a cover on the face cradle
  - More comfortable for client
  - Keeps makeup off vinyl

Safety Considerations and Body Mechanics

- Use proper body mechanics to prevent repetitive motion injuries
- Be sure you can move completely around chair during massage
- When using thumbs, “stack the bones” for proper alignment

Before the Seated Massage Begins

- If client’s first time, explain and demonstrate how to sit in chair
- Before session begins, adjust the chair to each client
- After adjustments, ask if they are comfortable

Massage Strokes Used for Seated Massage

- Compression, sustained pressure (acupressure)
- Deep and superficial friction
- Pètrissage
- Effleurage
- Tapotement

Compression and Sustained Pressure

- Compression effective on forearm and back
- Apply firm pressure primarily with heel of hand or loosely clenched fists
- Sustained pressure used to relieve trigger and tender points
- Use finger or thumb, elbow, or handheld tool

Deep and Superficial Friction

- Deep friction applied with thumb, finger, elbow, loosely clenched fist, palm, or heel of hand
- Superficial friction is warming, stimulating stroke applied with palms
Pétrissage, Effleurage, Tapotement
• Pétrissage used primarily in neck and upper trapezius
• Effleurage applied over clothing for relaxation and sedation
• Tapotement used at end of massage

Adaptive Professional Communication
• Important to talk to client to determine:
  – When it hurts
  – When it gets better
  – If the pain refers
  – If the therapist’s pressure is too hard
• Therapist should also “listen” for body language cues

Adaptive Professional Communication
• If area is noisy ask the client to raise a hand to indicate pain
• Establish a pain-measuring system using fingers raised; 1 being no pain and 5 being excruciating pain
• Use more or less pressure accordingly

Record Keeping
• Have each client fill out intake form
• Acquire informed consent
• Keep detailed treatment notes for clinical seated massage
• Provide receipts to clients

Sample Seated Massage Routine
• Routine can be done in 15 minutes and includes:
  – Upper back and neck
  – Lower back
  – Arm
  – Face and scalp
  – Stretches

The Upper Back and Neck
• Compression strokes to paraspinals with heels of hands or loosely clenched fists
• Client should breathe in rhythm
• Begin with scapulas and move inferiorly, one hand width at a time
The Upper Back and Neck

- Use loose fists to repeat previous pattern
- Make circular deep frictioning stroke 4–8 times down and up spine
- Apply four friction strokes medially to laterally over paraspinals
- Ask how client is doing every few minutes

The Upper Back and Neck

- Pétrissage the trapezius muscle
- Work laterally to the acromion process, then medially to base of neck

The Upper Back and Neck

- Now move to side of client; grasp and pétrissage back of neck
- Work up to occipital bone, then back down to shoulder
- Tilt face cradle forward so head and neck are at 45 degrees flexion
- Apply deep frictioning to tissues between occiput and C2

The Upper Back and Neck

- Examine rhomboids and posterior scapula with deep circular motion
- Can examine further with guided elbow
- Use circular friction below scapulas

Lower Back

- Use circular friction to relax lower back
- Palpate client’s waistline, being careful to avoid tickle response, to locate lateral end of 12th rib
- Apply deep friction with thumbs in lateral to medial direction on inferior surface

Lower Back

- Change directions of pressure to 45 degrees medial anterior
- Using circular friction, examine edge of lumbar spine
- Use deep circular friction to massage this area from L1 to the ilium bone
- Then change direction from inferior anterior and treat superior surface of ilium
Lower Back
- Use fingertips, thumbs, or guided elbow to examine lower portion of paraspinals
- Use sustained pressure on tender areas and trigger points

Arm
- Face front of chair, slightly to one side
- Place forearm with palm down on arm rest
- Treat forearm muscles with compression to the extensor muscle group, using heel of hand, working from wrist to elbow
- Repeat sequence three times

Arm
- Rotate arm, palm up
- Apply three sets of compression to flexor muscles
- Roll hand over, palm down, and repeat using circular friction applied with heel of hand
- Repeat three times

Arm
- Rotate arm, palm up
- Repeat circular friction moves on flexor muscles of forearm
- Use thumbs to apply circular friction to all sides of wrist
- Shake out arm before returning to arm rest

Face and Scalp
- Ask before performing face or scalp massage
- Apply circular friction to temples, jaw, face, and forehead

Stretches
- Stretches useful because most individuals spend a lot of time in flexed positions
- Passive and active-assisted stretches relax and lengthen habitually contracted tissues
Final Procedure

• Finish with effleurage and slow downward nerve strokes if goal is relaxation
• Tapotement can be used if client needs to be alert to return to work
• Have client exit chair slowly
• Recommend another appointment
• Disinfect chair, clean hands, write notes

Summary

• Seated massage in an important specialty area
• It usually employs a special portable chair and is performed through clothing without lubricants
• Sessions tend to be shorter, ranging from 5 to 30 minutes
• It is used to promote the therapist’s private practice or as a practice in itself