Cancer, Massage, and Detoxification

*Does Massage Have a Role, or Not?*

A Webinar with Tracy Walton, MS, LMT

Part 6 of the Massage in Cancer Care Webinar Series

Background

- Author
- Educator
- Researcher
- Massage Therapist
- Specialist in massage therapy and cancer care

Tracy Walton
Cancer, Massage, and Detoxification

Today’s Webinar

Teachings on massage and detoxification

Organs of detoxification

Cancer drugs and detoxification

Cancer drugs and gloving for massage
What are Massage Therapists Taught about Toxins?

- Massage will “flush” toxins out of the body
- Drink water after massage to accelerate

What IS a Toxin?
What IS a Toxin?

A point of confusion in massage therapy

Definitions:
Poisonous or venomous substance
Capable of doing harm or injury
Usually foreign to the body

Examples:
Heavy metals
Pesticides
Drugs
How Does the Body Detoxify?

- Kidney
- Liver
- Sweat, saliva, breast milk, tears
- Exhaled air

How Does the Body Eliminate Medications from the Body?

- Kidney
- Liver
- Sweat, saliva, breast milk, tears
- Exhaled air
The Kidney

1. Excretes drugs and other end products of metabolism
2. Moves from blood to urine
3. May move back to blood (reabsorb)
4. Unless converted from fat soluble to water soluble

The Liver

1. Metabolizes drugs and excretes into intestine via bile
2. May move back to blood (reabsorb) further down intestine
   Excretion/reabsorption = “enterohepatic cycling”
3. Drug may be excreted into feces and eliminated
4. May be reabsorbed and excreted in urine
Other Routes of Excretion

1. Minute amounts of medications excreted into sweat, saliva, tears, breast milk, exhaled air
2. Saliva usually swallowed
3. Some drugs excrete through eccrine glands in skin (sweat): (cyclophosphamide)

Types of Cancer Drugs

• **Chemotherapy**
• **Hormone therapies**
  Selective estrogen receptor modulators (SERMs)  
  (tamoxifen)
  Aromatase inhibitors (Arimidex)
  Others, etc.
• **Biologic therapies (Immunotherapy)**
  (Targeted therapies, interferon alpha, interleukins)
• **Medications for supportive care**
  (pain meds, anti-emetics, steroid meds, colony-stimulating factors, bisphosphonates, anti-seizure meds)
The “Toxin Theory of Massage”

General Issues

- What is a toxin?
- Does massage move toxins?
- If so, where?
- How do we know?
- Which techniques/modalities?
- Clinical vs. mechanistic outcomes of massage

Clinical vs. Mechanistic Effects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clinical Effect/Outcome</th>
<th>Mechanistic Effect/Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Change in a clinical parameter (such as symptom relief, improvement in function)</td>
<td>A physiological or pathophysiological change (such as concentration of a substance in the blood)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mechanistic outcomes may explain clinical outcomes
Clinical vs. Mechanistic Effects

Clinical Effects/Outcomes
- ↑ mental function
- ↓ pain
- ↓ depression, anxiety
- ↓ stress
- ↓ stress
- ↓ infection
- ???

Mechanistic Effects/Outcomes
- ↑ circulation
- ↑ endorphin levels
- ↑ serotonin
- ↓ epinephrine
- ↓ cortisol
- ↑ immune factors
- “Detoxification”

The “Massage and Detoxification” Question
Is a Mechanistic Question
Cancer Treatment

• Has many side effects

• Some therapies directly damage tissue

• Chemotherapy is toxic
  Monitoring for liver, renal, cardiac toxicity
  Neurotoxicity

Chemotherapy Toxicity

Chemotherapy leaves the body quickly

Effects linger for days, weeks, or longer
Massage, Chemotherapy, and Detoxification

Even if massage did move chemotherapy out of the body more quickly

It wouldn’t be relevant if chemotherapy has already left

It wouldn’t be advisable if it hasn’t left
Chemotherapy distribution/elimination carefully calculated
Not a time for vigorous massage

Pitfalls of Encouraging Detoxification through Massage

• Relies on mechanistic explanations
• We might be wrong
• Detoxification may be too much
• Massage intended to detoxify is often too vigorous for people
  Moving toxins?
  Some other mechanism?
  Too strong?
Guidelines
Re: Massage and “Detoxification”

• Research?

• Clinical observations
  Stories
  Consider post-treatment
  Use Activity and Energy Principle

The Activity and Energy Principle

A client who enjoys regular, moderate physical activity or a good overall energy level is better able to tolerate strong massage elements—including circulatory intent—than one whose activity or energy level is low.
Guidelines
Re: Massage and Detoxification?

• Steer clear of mechanistic explanations
  Murky
  Difficult to back up with research
  Hard to defend when challenged
  Could be wrong

• Use principles, gathered from practice

Guiding Principles

• The Detoxification Principle

• The Exfoliation Principle
The Detoxification Principle

If an intent of a spa treatment is to detoxify, avoid using it when the client is significantly challenged by illness or injury, or is taking strong medication.

The Exfoliation Principle

If a client’s skin health or overall health is significantly compromised, do not use treatments involving strong exfoliation.
Guidelines
Re: Massage and Detoxification?

• Communicate with simple, reasonable, defensible theories

• Emphasize common sense

• Make honest, humble claims
  - Massage benefits
  - Massage contraindications

Guidelines
Re: Massage and Detoxification?

• Develop good referral skills
• Learn about post-cancer treatment resources
• Cancer rehabilitation
• Integrative medicine
  • Acupuncture
  • Naturopath
  • Homeopath
My Client Story

• Detox after chemotherapy
• Requested deep colon massage
• Requested vigorous overall massage

My response?

• Stayed in scope of practice
• Questioned the “massage and detoxification” statement
• Argued for gentle massage as she recovered her strength
• Argued for supervised detoxification
• Referral
Chemotherapy, Toxicity, Skin Elimination and Gloves for Massage?

• History
• Started with thiotepa, cyclophosphamide

Chemotherapy, toxicity, skin elimination and gloves for Massage?

Started with thiotepa, cyclophosphamide...
Chemotherapy, toxicity, skin elimination and gloves for Massage?

Started with thiotepa, cyclophosphamide

Ended with
“Use gloves when massaging people in chemotherapy!”

So When Should I Glove? According to s4om.org

If pregnant or may become pregnant
Patient with thiotepa in past 24 hrs, or who hasn’t bathed since thiotepa
If uncomfortable without gloves, but get more info/training
Questions about methotrexate, cytosine, cytoxan (cyclophosphamide)?
(small amts through skin, not yet there at infusion, most of it gone in 1-2 days)
http://s4om.org/div0/gloving.htm
To recap

Massage and “detoxification” not established
Massage and “detoxification” not indicated
Massage techniques designed to “detoxify” likely too vigorous
Chemotherapy leaves quickly, as do most drugs
Some chemotherapy drugs eliminate through the skin, but probably a small fraction in most cases
Visit www.s4om.org
To recap

Massage in Cancer Care Webinar Series

1. Challenged old myths

2. Summarized research
Massage in Cancer Care Webinar Series

3. Features of Oncology Massage

4. Massage and unstable tissues

Massage in Cancer Care Webinar Series

5. Massage and Vital Organ Function

6. Massage and Detoxification
The Massage Pressure Scale

Medium pressure →

Pressure Level

3

“Medium Pressure”

- Used to warm up muscles for deeper work
- Body mechanics needed; adjacent joints rock
- Effleurage petrissage, repeated compressions thought to be “circulatory” at this pressure and above
What is Massage with Circulatory Intent?

Effleurage
Petrissage
Repeated compressions

Pressure Level

+ 3

“Medium Pressure”

(or above)

Increased Blood Flow

Elements of Massage To Adjust
- Contact
- Lubricant
- Pressure
- Joint Movement Friction
- Position
- Site of massage
- Draping
- Speed
- Rhythm
- Session length
- Session timing
- Session intent
- Medical consultation
- Medical referral

Complications
- Effects on liver function
- Effects on lung function
- Loss of bone integrity
- Effects on brain function

Medical Treatments
- Chemotherapy
- Surgery
- Radiation therapy
- Hormone therapy
- Biologic therapy
- “Bone marrow” transplant

Essentials
- Signs
- Symptoms
- Tumor site(s)
- Findings on tests

Cancer

Effects of Treatments
- Nausea
- Fatigue
- Pain
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Poor Sleep, etc
Massage Principles

• Vital Organ Principle
• Filter and Pump Principle
• Activity and Energy Principle
• Unstable Tissue Principle
• Detoxification Principle
• Exfoliation Principle

The Scope of This Webinar Series “Massage in Cancer Care”

• Share information
• Introduction to key issues and massage adjustments
• Appreciation of the complexity of cancer, treatment, and effects on the body
• Overview of literature resources
• Introduction to other resources—the Society for Oncology Massage and recognized training
Essential Resources for Practicing Safely with People with Cancer and Cancer Histories

Walton, T.  
Description and link at [www.tracywalton.com](http://www.tracywalton.com).

Collinge, W.  
“Touch, Caring & Cancer: Simple Instruction for Family and Friends”  
View trailers at [www.tracywalton.com](http://www.tracywalton.com);  
complete description at [www.partnersinhealing.net](http://www.partnersinhealing.net).

MacDonald, G.  
*Medicine Hands: Massage Therapy for People with Cancer.*  
Available at [www.medicinehands.com](http://www.medicinehands.com).

MacDonald, G.  
*Massage for the Hospital Patient and Medical Frail Client.*  
Available at [www.medicinehands.com](http://www.medicinehands.com).

Curties, D.  
*Massage Therapy & Cancer.*  
Available at [www.curties-overzet.com](http://www.curties-overzet.com).
The Society for Oncology Massage

www.s4om.org

Contact Information

Tracy Walton at www.tracywalton.com

Reach us at info@tracywalton.com
Additional Questions on Facebook

Facebook.com/DrBenBenjamin

Some questions I **cannot** answer

Some questions I **can** answer

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**Massage in Cancer Care**

*Other Webinars in this Series*

1. **Cancer, Massage, and the Myth of Metastasis:** *Why Skilled Massage Won’t Spread Cancer*  
   *(Pre-recorded)*

2. **Cancer, Massage, and Symptom Relief:** *What does Research Tell Us about the Benefits of Massage?*  
   *(Pre-recorded)*

3. **Cancer, Massage, and Safety Essentials:** *How is Oncology Massage Unique?*  
   *(Pre-recorded)*

4. **Cancer, Massage, and Unstable Tissues:** *Hidden Contraindications*  
   *(Pre-recorded)*

5. **Cancer, Massage, and the Vital Organ Principle:** *More Hidden Contraindications*  
   *(Pre-recorded)*

6. **Cancer, Massage, and Detoxification**  
   *Does Massage Have a Role, or Not?*  
   *(Pre-recorded)*
References


Walton T. Cancer and Massage Therapy: Contraindications due to Cancer Treatment (Part 2). Massage Therapy Journal Fall 2006 45(3):119-135. Also available as on line course at www.amtamassage.org


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Available on Demand

Unraveling the Mystery of Low Back Pain
Unraveling the Mystery of Cervical Pain
Unraveling the Mystery of Shoulder Pain
Unraveling the Mystery of Knee Pain
Unraveling the Mystery of Ankle Pain

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