Five-week outcomes from a dosing trial of therapeutic massage for chronic neck pain

Karen J. Sherman, PhD 1,2⇑, Andrea J. Cook, PhD 3, Robert D. Wellman, MS 1, Rene J. Hawkess, BS 1, Janet R. Kahn, PhD 4, Richard A. Deyo, MD, MPH 5 and Daniel C. Cherkin, PhD 1,6

Abstract

PURPOSE: This trial was designed to evaluate the optimal dose of massage for individuals with chronic neck pain.

METHODS: We recruited 228 individuals with chronic nonspecific neck pain from an integrated health care system and the general population, and randomized them to 5 groups receiving various doses of massage (a 4-week course consisting of 30-minute visits 2 or 3 times weekly or 60-minute visits 1, 2, or 3 times weekly) or to a single control group (a 4-week period on a wait list). We assessed neck-related dysfunction with the Neck Disability Index (range, 0–50 points) and pain intensity with a numerical rating scale (range, 0–10 points) at baseline and 5 weeks. We used log-linear regression to assess the likelihood of clinically meaningful improvement in neck-related dysfunction (≥5 points on Neck Disability Index) or pain intensity (≥30% improvement) by treatment group.

RESULTS: After adjustment for baseline age, outcome measures, and imbalanced covariates, 30-minute treatments were not significantly better than the wait list control condition in terms of achieving a clinically meaningful improvement in neck dysfunction or pain, regardless of the frequency of treatments. In contrast, 60-minute treatments 2 and 3 times weekly significantly increased the likelihood of such improvement compared with the control condition in terms of both neck dysfunction (relative risk = 3.41 and 4.98, P = .007 and .001, respectively) and pain intensity (relative risk = 2.30 and 2.73; P = .007 and .001, respectively).

CONCLUSIONS: After 4 weeks of treatment, we found multiple 60-minute massages per week more effective than fewer or shorter sessions for individuals with chronic neck pain. Clinicians recommending massage and researchers studying this therapy should ensure that patients receive a likely effective dose of treatment.

Key Words:
- chronic neck pain
- pain management
- disability
- massage
- clinical trial
- complementary and alternative medicine
- holistic medicine

Received for publication March 14, 2013. Revision received August 8, 2013. Accepted for publication September 10, 2013.

© 2014 Annals of Family Medicine, Inc.
Keywords: neck pain, chronic neck pain, disability. Introduction. Cervical spine is more vulnerable structure in the body to have mechanical changes due to its anatomical arrangement. Typically, patient’s visiting in Physiotherapy clinic having complaining of neck pain for long period of time and this ultimately leads to developing disability in activities of daily livings. Five-week outcomes from a dosing trial of therapeutic massage for chronic neck pain. Ann Fam Med. 2014;12(2):112–120. Massage is a viable, verified method of treating chronic neck pain with considerable measures of improvement and relief of symptoms when administered with regularity. The thoroughness of this study supports the use of therapeutic massage as a complementary treatment option. The measurements taken at the onset of the study showed that most people who suffer from chronic neck pain are not satisfied with conventional treatment options. With the finding of this study supporting therapeutic massage, the impact on the massage industry has the potential to grow exponentially. Five-Week Outcomes From a Dosing Trial of Therapeutic Massage for Chronic Neck Pain. Annals of Family Medicine, 12(2), 112-120. doi:10.1370/afm.1602. Cite This Work. Chronic neck pain patients may find symptom relief through multiple weekly massages. (RxWiki News) People who have lasting neck pain could get some relief by making the right phone call, which might be to a licensed massage therapist. A recent study found that those with chronic neck pain were able to achieve significant improvements in neck-related dysfunction and pain with multiple hour-long massages every week for one month. The researchers also found that the length of the massage and the frequency of the massage mattered. Annals of Family Medicine, “Five-Week Outcomes From a Dosing Trial of Therapeutic Massage for Chronic Neck Pain”. News. Features. Slideshows. Cryotherapy a Cool Trend After All? MS Treatment Approved for Children.