

Moderate Pressure Massage Therapy Can Decrease Pain for Rheumatoid Arthritis Patients

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The full study “Rheumatoid Arthritis in Upper Limbs Benefits from Moderate Pressure Massage Therapy” was published in

Complementary Therapies in Clinical Practice.

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By Field T., Diego M., Delgado J., Garcia D., Funk CG.

Touch Research Institute at the University of Miami School of Medicine, announced today the results of a new study that concludes moderate pressure massage therapy can decrease pain for rheumatoid arthritis patients.

Additionally, the study found that rheumatoid arthritis patients experienced perceived greater grip strength and greater range of motion in their wrists and large upper joints, including elbows and shoulders, after receiving moderate pressure massage therapy for one month. The study’s overview and results were published in the 2013 19 edition of Complementary Therapies in Clinical Practice Journal.

“Rheumatoid arthritis is a chronic disease that causes joints to become swollen, tender and stiff. While there is no cure to date, we do know now that moderate pressure massage therapy can help relieve pain and improve the quality of life for patients,” said C.G. Funk, vice president of industry relations and product development for Massage Envy. “The findings will be utilized to better educate our therapists, members, guests and the public on how to best incorporate massage into an overall wellness plan.”

Led by Tiffany Field, Ph.D., of the Touch Research Institute, the study examined the effects of moderate pressure versus light pressure massage therapy on 42 adults with rheumatoid arthritis in the upper limbs. The adults were randomly assigned to a moderate pressure or a light pressure massage therapy group. A therapist massaged the affected arm and shoulder once a week for a four-week period and also taught the participant self-massage to be done once daily. By the end of the one-month period, results of the study demonstrated the moderate pressure massage group had

less pain, increased grip strength, increased wrist flexion, increased elbow flexion and increased shoulder abduction. The study also found that participants in both groups experienced a reduction in depressed mood and anxiety.

“As patients with rheumatoid arthritis work with their doctors to determine the best treatment option, we recommend discussing routine massage therapy given the positive effects found in our study,” said Field. “In addition to physical activity, such as yoga, moderate pressure massage therapy along with self-massage techniques can help manage the pain and stress that occurs from various forms of arthritis.”

Field T., Diego M., Delgado J., Garcia D., Funk CG., Rheumatoid Arthritis in Upper Limbs Benefits from Moderate Pressure Massage Therapy. *Complementary Therapies in Clinical Practice*. 2013 May;19(2):101-3. doi: 10.1016/j.ctcp.2012.12.001.