

Massage for Patients Suffering from Chronic Low Back Pain, or not?

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Massage is one treatment option for patients with chronic low back pain. In daily routine a combined therapy out of massage, exercise therapy and other physical therapies leads often to pain reduction and improvements in function and quality of life. These promising effects are not always reflected in the literature. For this reason the evidence level for massage in patients with low back pain is stated level C according to a Cochrane review in 2009 by Furlan et al.

One problem in evaluating massage for patients with low back pain is the taxonomy of the different massage treatments. Often different kinds of massage are mixed in comparing studies. Another problem is

the quality - like design or number of patients - of the included studies. There is a high heterogeneity in interventions (style, quantity and quality of treatment, experience of the masseur), outcome measures and follow-up evaluations. The most severe limitation is that these studies do not really reflect provided treatment in daily routine.

Because of these huge limitations we should not neglect our expertise and experience. Furthermore, as this is a really important topic in medicine with a high impact on quality of life of our patients and additionally carries a high economic burden it is crucial to continue research in the field of massage.

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