Semi

A physio said: who would be the first to see the three clients of degree qualified

Managing the ACC parameters around New Zealand Family

Massage therapy is effective for some

The interviewer had limited interviewing

Pseudonyms

Three degree qualified massage

All participants agreed that massage therapy

The massage industry does not belong to the

The ACC funding covers only the injured part of

A higher quality massage from a degree BTSM

Massage therapy provides another avenue of

The massage therapist described their job as:

The physiotherapist said “I know that massage therapists don’t actually have to be qualified to call themselves massage therapists. So anyone who’s done the course can out and theoretically practice massage, versus someone who has done a three-year degree. A qualified massage therapist would be the only people that should be allowed to provide that care. We need to keep our standards high in order to be treating clients. Any less than that wouldn’t be really acceptable because that’s the level of the standard we expect had to be degree qualified.”

Betty the massage therapist said “therapeutic treatments are not always enjoyable and sometimes can be painful for the client.”

Yes !

What did the participants say?

Discussion

According to Lawler and Cameron (2004, p. 229) “New Zealand has the highest education standards in the world for massage therapy.” The authors found that the majority of general practitioners in their study “recommended that a patient see a massage therapist for musculoskeletal problems, stress, pain, and strains.” The authors go on to report that “training in therapeutic massage requires extensive practice of a variety of techniques as well as education in assessment, anatomy and physiology.” The health professional stakeholder group said massage therapy was an effective treatment option for their patients and that is why they used massage therapy as a treatment in their practice. All of the stakeholders agree that there is a need for ACC funding of rehabilitation massage treatments by a degree qualified therapist. The stakeholders agree that rehabilitation massage therapy being funded by ACC would be a benefit to the health system and give the public another funded treatment option. It appears that effectiveness of massage therapy is not a concern, rather the unregulated nature of the massage therapy industry and the variation in qualification levels. Therefore, the way forward for degree qualified massage therapists would be to have a recognised regulatory body and an annual practicing certificate; these two requirements would address the issue of lack of regulation within the massage industry. Future research could investigate other stakeholder perspectives, including ACC, and identify strategies to work with the challenges of ACC funding.

The findings indicate that there is a need for regulations and standards to be established in New Zealand for massage therapy. Furthermore, once regulations and standards are established and a professional body is formed, degree qualified massage therapists may then meet the criteria to practice under the HPCA Act. These changes to the massage industry could then pave the way for degree qualified massage therapists to become an accredited ACC health provider.

This would ultimately assist the clients who would benefit from massage therapy for their rehabilitation.

Should rehabilitation massage therapy be funded by ACC?

Benefits, barriers and strategies for bachelor degree qualified massage therapists to access Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) funding for their rehabilitation clients: stakeholder perceptions.

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Objective

The aim of this small scale project was to capture the stakeholders’ thoughts and perspectives on massage therapy treatments being funded by ACC for the rehabilitation of massage therapy clients.

Method

• Semi-structured face to face interviews were conducted with three groups of stakeholders that met the inclusion criteria.
• Thematic analysis was used to capture themes.
• Pseudonyms used to protect the stakeholders’ identities.
• The study was approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee, Southern Institute of Technology.

Participants

There were three groups that participated:
• Three client’s of degree qualified massage therapists.
• Three degree qualified massage therapists with a Bachelor of Therapeutic & Sports Massage (BTSM).
• Three health professionals (physio).

Total = Nine.

Limitations

1. This study consisted of a total of nine participants which is a relatively small group to gain views and opinions from.
2. Face to face interviews can be create bias.
3. The interviewer had limited interviewing experience.

Introduction

Massage therapy by a massage therapist is currently not funded by ACC. In order to be funded by ACC within New Zealand, a health professional is required to practice under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (HPCA). Some of these health professionals are: physiotherapists, osteopaths, chiropractors and acupuncturepractitioners. Additionally; these are regulated professions which certifies practitioner competency on an annual basis. This legislation is designed to ensure practitioner competency which in turn protects the public from unqualified practitioners and misconduct. In addition, this legislation allows the consumer the ability and the right to complain about the health service. Therefore, one of the aims of this Act (HPCA) is to ensure a level of quality care within the New Zealand health care system. Any health professional found to be working outside of this Act is put before a disciplinary board (Ministry of Health, 2017). The practitioners that are registered with ACC Health providers are eligible for government-subsidised treatments for their patients that have been injured due to an accident (Accident Compensation Corporation, 2017a).

References


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• 1. A description of a massage therapist according to ACC is “performs therapeutic massage and administers body treatments for relaxation, other health, fitness and remedial purposes” (Accident Compensation Corporation, 2017a). ACC states that a typical work task of a massage therapist is: “massages the soft tissue of the body, such as muscles, tendons and ligaments, to assist healing; utilises a range of massage techniques to enhance sports performance and prevent injury; administers treatments to promote relaxation, improve circulation and relieve muscle tension; assesses and treats specific soft tissue dysfunction and provides rehabilitation advice; employs other techniques such as acupressure, hot compresses, ice, essential oils, to assist recovery; assesses clients physical condition and case history and advises on stretching exercise and relaxation techniques” (ACC, 2017b).

Results

Benefits

1. All participants agreed that massage therapy by a degree qualified therapist should be funded by ACC for their treatment.
2. All participants said: less financial burden for the consumer & therefore increased access to massage therapy rehabilitation treatments.
3. The clients said: quicker healing time of an injury.
4. A higher quality massage from a degree BTSM qualified therapist.
5. Massage therapy is effective for some conditions and all said the clients would benefit.
6. Massage therapy provides another avenue of treatment for clients.
7. A client said: it’s a preventative treatment and may reduce medical costs for the country.

Challenges

• A physio said: who would be the first to see the client after an accident, the physiotherapist or the massage therapist? And how would the cause of pain be determined to qualify for ACC payments for treatments?
• Managing the ACC parameters around treatment timeframe, cost and client funding entitlement.
• ACC funding covers only the injured part of the body; massage therapists have an holistic full body approach to treatment.
• The massage industry will need to overcome the perception that massage therapy is enjoyable and not a treatment.
• Checks and audits by ACC cost money for the health provider.

Barriers

• The massage industry does not belong to the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003.
• The massage industry is not regulated.
• Massage therapists do not need an annual practicing certificate to practice.

Therapeutic Massage

Decide whether to refer the client to a massage therapist or use clinical reasoning.

• There is no mandatory insurance coverage for the following:
  • Professional liability insurance
  • Professional indemnity insurance

**Benefits, barriers and strategies for bachelor degree qualified massage therapists to access Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) funding for their rehabilitation clients: stakeholder perceptions.**