The Barriers to the Use of Massage Therapy by Non-Users

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INTRODUCTION

The use of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) is one of the fastest growing sectors in the health industry. The use of massage therapy is increasing, however, there are barriers that are preventing people seeking this health service.²

METHOD

A qualitative approach was used and participants were recruited using snowball sampling.¹ Semi-structured 15 minute interviews were undertaken in June 2017 and thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. Pseudonyms were used when reporting the results to maintain the anonymity of participants. EthICAL approval was granted by the Southern Institute of Technology Human Research Ethics Committee.

PARTICIPANTS

There were five participants: 4 were female and 1 was male. All resided in Mid-CaRTerbury, NZ. The inclusion criteria were: all participants were non-users of massage therapy; all were over the age of 18 years; and could communicate in English.

RESULTS

PERCEPTIONS OF MASSAGE THERAPY

Participants thought that massage therapy was used for:
- Relaxation
- Good for Sports
- Good for Joints
- A General Body Aid

BARRIERS

Four themes were highlighted when participants shared their views on the barriers to using massage therapy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lack of knowledge</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Unwanted Touch</th>
<th>Cost</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Narratives from Participants</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of knowledge: “I know it is beneficial but that’s all I know.” – Ann</td>
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<td>Time: “Just ... the time it takes.” – George</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unwanted touch: “Well personally for myself the reason why I stopped it would be that I don’t really like to be touched by strangers.” – Sally</td>
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<td>Cost: “If it was expensive then that would be quite off putting because I’m a bit tight with money.” – Wendy</td>
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</table>

BENEFITS

Four themes were highlighted when participants shared their views on the benefits of massage therapy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reduction in pain</th>
<th>Reduction in stress</th>
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<tr>
<td>Narratives from Participants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduction in pain: “Like relaxes your muscles helps with pain.” – Ann</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduction in stress: “It reduces stress and makes you feel relaxed.” – George</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

INFORMATION FOR CONSIDERATION

When participants were asked, what information was needed for them to consider massage therapy, four themes emerged which included:
- Benefits |
- Services available |
- Expected outcome |
- Knowledge |
- Regulation |
- Qualifications

NARRATIVES FROM PARTICIPANTS

Narratives from Participants

Reduction in tension: “If you’ve got sore muscles it helps them feel better and takes the tension away.” – Sarah

Sports: “Like sports and all that. Like it’s good for the rugby players.” – Ann

INFORMATION FOR CONSIDERATION

Key words that were commonly associated with “massage therapy” in this study; larger text represents words which were used more often.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study suggested that non-users of massage therapy viewed massage therapy in a positive light and had some information regarding what it was used for. However, they were unaware of many other benefits of using massage therapy and that not all massage therapists were qualified. They lacked information about what a massage therapy session entailed and mentioned that more information about the service, benefits, cost, and expected outcomes of a massage treatment would be helpful.

The findings of this research align with Dickinson, Giles and Smith (2009), where they found that knowledge, time, cost, and the unknown were barriers for non-users of massage therapy in Southland.

In order for more non-users of massage therapy to consider this modality then strategies to educate the public about the benefits of massage therapy need to be addressed. Also, to help increase the awareness and knowledge of massage therapy and massage therapists qualifications, then more emphasis needs to be on the promotion and education of the general public. More promotion by individual massage therapists is important as well as promotion and education by Massage New Zealand. This would help ensure that non-users of massage therapy are getting the appropriate information that they need to make an informed decision.

DIRECTION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- Educating other healthcare professionals about massage therapy.
- Strategies to educate the public.
- Reducing barriers for non-users of massage therapy - a plan for the future.

LIMITATIONS

A small sample size that cannot be generalised to all non-users of massage therapy.

REFERENCES