Abstract
The aim of this study was to establish whether a sense of comfort was important to the massage client, and determine the factors that contributed to client comfort within a clinic-based massage therapy session. Participants who were clients of the 2005 Southern Institute of Technology (SIT) Student Massage Clinic completed a 13-item questionnaire. Collectively the exploratory data provided a range of factors that contributed to client comfort within the clinic setting.

Comfort during a clinic-based massage session was important to all fifty-five participants with comfort commonly described as “happy and at ease”, “warm, cozy environment” and “environment warm and tranquil.” The professionalism of the practitioner was ranked the most important factor in client comfort by 91% of respondents; other factors that contributed highly to comfort were hygiene, room temperature, privacy of the room, professional presentation, friendliness, type of touch and technique application.

The study supports many educational practices regarding client comfort; however, unexpected findings regarding music, chattiness of the therapist and depth of touch are elicited. The project highlights findings of relevance for research, administration and clinical practice.

Methodology
Descriptive survey [closed questions (n=9); open questions (n=4); ranking questions (n=1)] developed, based on curriculum. Pilot (n=4) of questions.

Statistical Analysis: Descriptive statistics; Sample size limited further small sub-group analysis by gender, age, massage knowledge, massage type and prior massage experience.

Results
Participants: 82% were 21-50 yrs; 87% had prior massage experience; 38% were current or past massage students; massage type: 30% relaxation, 70% treatment.

Factors: participant presentation (47%), temperature of room (47%), massage techniques selected (68%), type of touch (55%), practitioner professionalism (47%), comfort (47%).

Results cont.
Factors most influencing comfort: professionalism (91%), massage techniques selected (68%), type of touch (55%), practitioner presentation (47%), temperature of room (47%).

Factors related to massage room
- 100% stated the importance of hygiene.
- 90% preferred a warm room, 8% a hot room, 2% a cool room.
- 42% wanted to hear no noise from adjacent rooms, 39% wanted to hear no noise, and 19% accepted muffled noise from adjacent rooms.

Factors related to practitioner
- 64% of clients preferred some chat with the practitioner and 19% preferred silence during the massage.
- 28 of 51 clients wanted to be greeted with a smile and a handshake, 39 wanted to be shown care and concern, and 42 wanted to be shown respect during the session.
- 28% of clients wanted the therapist to be friendly, 19% wanted the therapist to be professional, and 42% wanted the therapist to be caring.

Factors related to client environment
- 64% of clients preferred some chat with the practitioner and 19% preferred silence during the massage.
- 28 of 51 clients wanted to be greeted with a smile and a handshake, 39 wanted to be shown care and concern, and 42 wanted to be shown respect during the session.
- 28% of clients wanted the therapist to be friendly, 19% wanted the therapist to be professional, and 42% wanted the therapist to be caring.

Aims
- To establish whether a sense of comfort was important to the massage client.
- To explore the factors that contributed to client comfort within a massage therapy session.
- To create baseline data for further studies and assist in assessment and teaching practices.

Key Findings
- Comfort is important to massage clients.
- Practitioner professionalism had the greatest impact on comfort.
- Both practitioner and environmental factors are important for client comfort.

Recommendations
- Opinions may vary in different massage settings - client perceptions in a range of settings need to be determined.
- Further investigation of a larger population to determine the effect of gender, culture and subgroups on the patterns found.

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