Netball is, and has been for a number of years, New Zealand’s most popular female sport (McGrath, 1998, p. 1). The high impact nature of the game causes many injuries to players each year. In recent times massage therapy use has become more popular amongst elite and recreational athletes (Moraska, 2005, p. 370), with the effects of massage including reduced muscle tension, an increase in blood flow and providing an increased sense of well-being (Weerapong, Hume & Kolt, 2005, p. 236). Therefore, with the benefits netball players can gain from massage therapy, are they using it? As a massage therapist and netball player the researcher wanted to investigate the utilisation and barriers to netball players in Invercargill receiving massage.

A face to face survey using a questionnaire was undertaken at the Invercargill netball courts during a Saturday competition in June, 2011. The researcher collected a total of 69 questionnaires out of a total of 515 registered players (who were over 17 years) with the Invercargill netball centre. The questionnaire was piloted (n=10), and contained open (n=4) and closed (n=8) ended questions. Ethical approval was given by the SIT School of Health, Exercise and Recreation Ethics Committee.

The results of this study showed that a majority of participants were between 21-30 years. 62.3% (n=43/69) of participants had received massage before but only 18.6% (n=8/43) continued to receive it on a regular basis. Out of those that had received massage before just over half (51.1%, n=22/43) had received massage in the last 12 months. Time restraints and costs were the most frequent reason for not using massage. 92.5% (n=62/67) of participants thought massage was good for them (even if they had not received any in the past), and 88.7% (n=55/62) had enjoyed previous experiences of massage.

The key points are:

- The results of this study showed that a majority of participants were between 21-30 years.
- 62.3% (n=43/69) of participants had received massage before but only 18.6% (n=8/43) continued to receive it on a regular basis. Out of those that had received massage before just over half (51.1%, n=22/43) had received massage in the last 12 months.
- Relaxation and injury management were the main reasons for receiving massage.
- Time restraints and costs were the most frequent reason for not using massage.
- 92.5% (n=62/67) of participants thought massage was good for them (even if they had not received any in the past), and 88.7% (n=55/62) had enjoyed previous experiences of massage.

The results showed that a majority of players had received massage before but because of the cost or busy lifestyles most did not continue to receive massage regularly. However, of the participants that did receive massage regularly, positive results were the main reason for continuing use. These results show massage therapy to be liked and thought of as beneficial by most participants, but time and cost prevents regular use. Therefore, barriers to use needs to be addressed by providers.

References: