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Aneurin Bevan
University Health Board

Specialist Hospital Palliative Care Team

Complementary Therapies Helpful Information



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Complementary Therapies are offered for patients who are under the care of the Hospital Palliative Care Team during their admission and are dependent upon suitability.

This booklet is about complementary therapies. There are many different types of therapy. We hope it gives you a balanced view of what's available and what's involved if you decide to try one.

Before a treatment, the complementary therapist will explain the process involved and welcome any questions you may have.

After a consultation and consent agreed with the patient, this will then be entered into their medical records

COMPLEMENTARY THERAPY

Complementary therapies have been around for many centuries.

The history of alternative therapies has been well documented over the years.

A wide range of treatments exists under the umbrella term of complementary therapy. Each treatment has its own unique theory and practice, which makes it difficult to offer a blanket definition.

Complementary therapies aim to treat the entire person, not just the symptoms.

Complementary therapies are used alongside, or in addition to conventional medical treatments. These therapies can be used to maintain/support a person's well being or to reduce/relieve symptoms or side effects. Some have been scientifically tested to check how effective and safe they are.

COMPLEMENTARY NOT ALTERNATIVE

While many therapies can be used to support people who have a medical condition, it is important to note that these should not be used in place of conventional medical care.

Always consult your GP or other health professional for medical attention and advice.

Similarly, if under the care of a GP or other health professional, seek their advice before undertaking any therapy or altering any medication.

Complementary therapies may help:

- ❖ Enhance your quality of life
- ❖ Improve sleep patterns
- ❖ Reduce tension, anxiety and stress
- ❖ Promotes relaxation
- ❖ Managing a specific symptom
- ❖ Ease pain
- ❖ Reduce fatigue



ACUPUNCTURE

Acupuncture is a treatment derived from ancient Chinese medicine in which fine sterile needles are inserted at certain sites in the body for therapeutic or preventative purposes. It is used in many NHS general practices, as well as the majority of pain clinics and hospices in the UK.

After taking an appropriate medical history, the acupuncture practitioner will begin the insertion of the acupuncture needles. These needles are inserted into specific places on the body, which practitioners call acupuncture points.

During the session you will be asked to sit or lie down. You may also be asked to remove some clothes so the practitioner can access relevant parts of your body.

The needles used are fine and are usually a few centimetres long. They should be single use, pre-sterilized needles that are disposed of immediately after use.



AROMATHERAPY

Aromatherapy is the practice of using the natural oils extracted from flowers, bark, stems, leaves, roots or other parts of a plant to enhance psychological and physical well-being.

There are a wide variety of essential oils available, each with its own unique properties. If you decide to visit an aroma therapist, you will first have a detailed consultation. Your aroma therapist will ask you questions about your medical history, diet, lifestyle and health issues. You can also ask any questions you might have. Remember, it's important to talk to your GP first to get a diagnosis before having aromatherapy. This is to ensure that aromatherapy is an appropriate treatment for you. However, they may be able to advise you on a course of aromatherapy treatment.

Your aroma therapist may recommend a single oil or a blend of two or three. They will give you a massage using essential oils that have been diluted in a carrier oil. A carrier oil is usually extracted from vegetables, nuts or seeds.

Aromatherapy may be used during massage, in baths or through diffusers. It is not always necessary to remove clothing for an aromatherapy treatment.

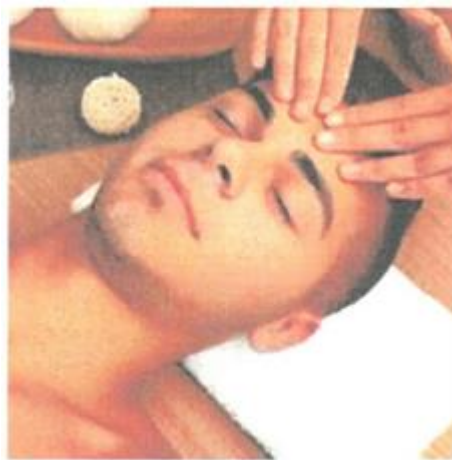


INDIAN HEAD MASSAGE

Indian head massage has been practiced for over 1000 years.

Traditionally, the techniques were restricted to the head and hair, to improve scalp and hair condition of Indian women. Nowadays, a system incorporating the upper back, shoulders, neck, upper arms and face in the belief that these are important energy centres in the body and by treating these, the whole body can benefit.

This simple yet effective therapy uses a variety of techniques to manipulate soft tissue. It is performed with the client in a seated position, usually through light clothing and without the use of oils. The therapist uses a range of different massage pressures and rhythms to stimulate the head, neck, upper back and shoulder area.



MASSAGE

Massage has been used for centuries.

Massage therapy is a system of treatment that works by stroking, kneading, tapping or pressing the soft tissues of the body. It aims to relax you mentally and physically. There are several types of massage.

The massage therapists may treat your whole body, or concentrate on a specific part of the body such as your head, neck or shoulders. Some types of massage are soft and gentle, where as other types are more intense on application.

The amount of pressure a therapist applies when massaging a person can vary greatly between the types and applications of a particular massage. It is important that you let the therapist know if you feel uncomfortable and want them to pause or stop at any time. However, most people say that having a massage is very relaxing and soothing.



'M' TECHNIQUE

'M' technique is a registered method of touch suitable for the very fragile or when massage is inappropriate. It is a series of stroking movements performed in a set sequence at set pressure. Benefits of 'M' technique: rapid and profound, relaxing effect. Safe and effective.

The 'M' technique can have measurable therapeutic effect on:

- ❖ Fear
- ❖ Anxiety
- ❖ Grief
- ❖ Anger
- ❖ Chronic pain
- ❖ Chronic fatigue
- ❖ Depression
- ❖ Headaches/migraines
- ❖ Insomnia
- ❖ Sprains and strains
- ❖ Low immune function
- ❖ Stress



REFLEXOLOGY

Reflexology involves a method of treatment using massage to reflex areas found in the feet and the hands. Most commonly, the feet are used as the areas to be treated.

Within the feet and hands, there are reflex areas corresponding to all the parts of the body. These areas are arranged in such a way as to form a map of the body, which enables the therapist to treat the person as a whole.

Prior to a treatment, the reflexology therapist will take a detailed medical history. The patient will then be made comfortable on a treatment couch or seated. An initial examination of the feet will be carried out before applying pressure to specific points. All areas on both feet will be massaged.

The sensitivity of the feet varies from person to person and the trained therapist will understand the correct pressure. The massage should not be uncomfortable to even the most sensitive of feet.



REIKI

Reiki was developed by Dr Mikao Usui in Japan and the word Reiki is Japanese for universal life energy.

Reiki is a tradition that is open to any belief system.

Reiki can be used alongside other conventional or complementary treatment and often helps to provide mental and emotional support during recovery.

The method of receiving Reiki is simple. The recipient remains clothed and lies on a couch or sits on a chair and relaxes. The practitioner gently places their hands in a series of non-intrusive positions on or near the body. There is no massage or manipulation. The whole person is treated rather than specific areas.

Reiki practitioners are not trained in diagnosis and will not predict any specific outcome from treatment.

What do Reiki treatments feel like? Each person experiences Reiki differently depending on their individual needs at the time.

Clients may or may not feel sensations during a Reiki treatment. Benefits reported by recipients include deep relaxation, promoting a calm, peaceful sense of well-being on all levels. Some people feel sensations of heat, tingling, or experience seeing colours.





RELAXATION

Try to find a quiet place free from interruptions. Find a comfortable position to relax, such as lying down or sitting. Make sure you are feeling warm and comfortable to prevent any unnecessary tension. Let relaxation happen, don't try to force it. Allow time. Like other techniques, relaxation takes practice.

Ideas for relaxation:

- ❖ Complementary therapy
- ❖ Mindfulness
- ❖ Visualizations relaxation
- ❖ Breathing exercises
- ❖ Listening to music
- ❖ Colouring
- ❖ Tai Chi

TAI CHI AND QI GONG

Suitable for most people and all ages.

Tai Chi and Qi Gong (pronounced Chi Kung) comes from ancient Chinese traditions.

Both focus on building strength, balance and flexibility, they use slow fluid movements, with guided imagery and breathing exercises.

One part of each movement will encourage an in breath, another part will encourage an out breath. Follow your own natural breath.

The movements can be practiced in a seated position.

For people with fatigue, this can help restore their energy levels. They can be a good way of getting back into doing physical activity.



YOUR NOTES AND QUESTIONS

This booklet looks at the complementary therapies we provide for the patients under the care of Aneurin Bevan University Health Board.

There are lots of organisations that can give you information on complementary therapy.

British Complementary Medicine Association (BCMA)

www.bcma.co.uk

Federation of Holistic Therapists (FHT)

www.fht.org.uk

Macmillan Cancer Support

www.macmillan.org.uk

Regulatory organisations will be able to provide you with a list of registered therapists.

Always use a qualified therapist who belongs to a professional body.

Booklet designed by Complementary Therapists
Jayne Evans, Louise Tetley and Jackie Hayes

“This document is available in Welsh /Mae’r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg”.