

## What is new at Touching Well?

My “belly year” continues into 2014, I have just been to Certification training for **Arvigo Techniques of Maya Abdominal Therapy™**. I was trained by **Rosita Arvigo**. She was an apprentice of Maya traditional healers and was tasked by to keep this ancient and wonderful treatment alive.



Ix Chel is the Maya Goddess of Medicine, Weaving and Childbirth, here depicted through the three stages of a woman's life – Maiden, Mother and Crone/Grandmother.

In March I had my left bunion operated upon (last September it was the right foot). This time I knew what was coming. The first two weeks elevating were necessary and a bit boring. Again I used Deep Oscillation as soon as the dressing came off to bring the swelling down further and promote healing. I have to report now that I have two beautifully shaped feet (as beautiful as they get). I promise I will not go for a bunion operation in time for the next newsletter.

## Massage is sensational

Food for thought from **David Palmer**, the “father” of chair massage.

“A recent article in The Atlantic about a phenomenon called ASMR (autonomous sensory meridian response) reminded me of how little we celebrate the purely sensational nature of massage.

ASMR is a subjective sensory experience that typically includes highly pleasurable tingling in the head triggered by external audio or visual stimuli such as whispering, tapping or watching certain videos. Possibly because someone early on began referring to this sensation as a “brain orgasm,” the ASMR idea went viral with articles appearing on Slate, Time, and Huffington Post as well as numerous podcasts and radio programs. YouTube already lists nearly 2 million videos on the subject.

I had two reactions when I first read about ASMR. The first was, “What’s the fuss about? Every time I get a massage, I tingle all over, including in my head and brain.” My second thought was, “How come massage doesn’t have 2 million videos on how good massage feels?”

Professional massage exists on a social acceptability spectrum that can be summarized into four major categories: [Continued on last page.](#)

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Wishing you a spring in your step,

*Regina Dengler*



## How heavy is a glass of water? It depends ...

A psychologist walked around a room while teaching stress management to an audience. As she raised a glass of water, everyone expected they'd be asked the "half empty or half full" question. Instead, with a smile on her face, she inquired: "How heavy is this glass of water?"

Answers called out ranged from 8 oz. to 20 oz.

She replied, "The absolute weight doesn't matter. It depends on how long I hold it. If I hold it for a minute, it's not a problem. If I hold it for an hour, I'll have an ache in my arm. If I hold it for a day, my arm will feel numb and paralysed. In each case, the weight of the glass doesn't change, but the longer I hold it, the heavier it becomes." She continued, "The stresses and worries in life are like that glass of water. Think about them for a while and nothing happens. Think about them a bit longer and they begin to hurt. And if you think about them all day long, you will feel paralysed – incapable of doing anything."

It's important to remember to let go of your stresses. As early in the evening as you can, put all your burdens down. Don't carry them through the evening and into the night. Remember to put the glass down! -author unknown

## Acupressure for fatigue

Being tired and fatigued is a normal part of life, particularly if this is the price for a good time. However, if it lasts too long, and is caused by sickness rather than fun or a bit of extra stress, it starts to get worrying. Many illnesses have fatigue as a major symptom, kidney disease being one of them. A study looked at how acupressure affected fatigue in people on dialysis. Ninety six people were given a couple of questionnaires to measure fatigue at the beginning and the

end of the trial. They were split into three groups: The treatment groups received 20 minutes massage 3 times a week for 4 weeks using six acupressure points. The placebo group received the same treatment but 1 cm from the skin, and the control group received standard care. They found that patients who had received the "proper" acupressure massage, rather than the treatment in the air or standard care, experienced less fatigue (Iran J Nurs Midwifery Res. 2013 Nov;18(6):429-34). I use acupressure, rather than Indian Head massage, during on-site massage as it leaves recipients calm, yet alert, ready to go to work.

### Recent feedback

*I am beginning to realise the benefits of massage over the years on my stress level, anxiety and the level of tension.  
Monica, Thorneywood, aged 74,  
has been coming for many years.*

*Have not felt so relaxed in many months.  
That was wonderful.  
Sarah, Alfreton*

## Aromatherapy and stress

Aromatherapy can be applied in many different ways, as a massage, in a bath, a compress, or inhalation. The last method is very popular in clinical trials, as it does not require much input from a therapist and is therefore cheaper. In this Massage Message I'll list a number of these trials.

Nurses carried small bottles of 3% lavender oil on their right chest for inhalation, a control group carried unscented oil. In the aromatherapy group nurses reported a significant reduction in stress symptoms for 3-4 days, while the control group reported slightly increased stress levels. (Int J Nurs Pract. 2013 Nov 15) How simple is that?



## Aromatherapy

### ... and sleep

Patients in a hospital had a jar of lavender oil on their bedside table. It was found that these patients tended to sleep better and have lower blood pressure during the night.

(*Am J Crit Care*. 2014 Jan;23(1):24-9.).

### ... and anxiety before surgery

In another study patients were given bergamot essential oil or water vapour to inhale prior to a daycare surgical procedure. The anxiety was reduced substantially in those people who inhaled bergamot oil prior to surgery. (*Evid Based Complement Alternat Med*.

2013;2013:927419

### ... for nausea after general anaesthetic

How does an inhaler containing Peppermint, Ginger, Spearmint and Lavender essential oil compare with a water inhaler for nausea and vomiting after a general anaesthetic? Very well, according to a recent study. People who used the aromatherapy inhaler reported less nausea and sickness than those with the water inhaler. (*J Perianesth Nurs*. 2014 Feb;29(1))

## Massage helps MS patients cope

A study looked at clients with Multiple Sclerosis (MS), how massage (compared to waiting list) affected their belief that they can competently cope with a challenging situation (self-efficacy). Clients received 8 weekly one hour massages, controls remained on the waiting list. Both groups were questioned (with the Multiple Sclerosis Self-Efficacy survey) every 4 weeks, at the beginning, after 4 treatments, after 8 treatments, 4 weeks and 8 weeks after the massage sessions. Clients in the massage group had an improvement in self-efficacy after 4 and 8 massages, as well as 4 weeks after the massages. Eight weeks after the treatment series there was no difference in their belief that they can cope. (*J Bodyw Mov Ther*.

2014 Jan;18(1):11-6).

## Massage for burns scars

I have been advised to massage my scars after my recent foot surgery. Any scar can heal in such a way that it is raised (hypertrophic), inelastic, red, itchy and/or constrictive, but this possibility is much higher after a severe burn. A study looks at how massage can help burn patients with hypertrophic scar(s). All 146 patients received standard care for their scars, in addition 76 patients (massage group) received burn scar rehabilitation massage therapy. Before and after the treatment the scars were assessed in lots of ways: pain, itchiness, and various scar characteristics, such as thickness, colour, and elasticity.

All participants reported less pain and itchiness at the end of the study, but more so in the massage group. The same was true for scar characteristics, the scars were thinner, more elastic and had a better colour, but the effect was better in the massage group. This means that time passing while undergoing standard therapy is effective, but in addition burn rehabilitation massage therapy is more effective in improving pain, itching, and scar characteristics in hypertrophic scars after burn. (*Burns*. 2014 Mar 11. pii: S0305-4179(14)00065-5).

## Osteoarthritis and massage

Which complementary therapies help with osteoarthritis (OA)? A Meta-analysis (a statistical literature review) found that Tai Chi, acupuncture, yoga and massage therapy are safe for use by people with OA. There is no evidence (yet?) on the long-term effects, but reduced pain and improved self-reported physical functioning lasting six months or less were found for all 4 modalities. (*Pain Manag Nurs*. 2013 Dec;14(4):e274-88).  
No quick fix, need to top it up.



## MLD for stress

I find MLD very relaxing, so do most of my clients. The movements are rhythmic and slow, rhythmic and slow, rhythmic and slow, ... very relaxing and calming. This was tested on 26 stressed people. Half received 15 minutes MLD on the neck, the other half rested on a bed. Relaxation was measured with EEG (electroencephalography).

The EEGs in the MLD group showed a significant increase in relaxation, manifested as an increase in average absolute and relative delta and alpha activity. This suggests that MLD provides neural effects that relax stressed people.

(*J Phys Ther Sci.* 2014 Jan;26(1):127-9.)

## MLD for venous disease

When I did my lymphoedema training nine years ago, I learnt that the same methods, MLD, compression, exercise and skin care, are effective in chronic venous disease (CVD), too. Only now studies confirm the positive effect of MLD on venous disease.

Seventy people scheduled for surgery were enrolled in a study. 38 received 10 daily 20 minute MLD sessions prior to surgery. All received an assessment of their CVD, including complications, and completed a quality of life question and 4 weeks after the operation. MLD alone significantly reduced oedema in the foot. It also improved their quality of life. Furthermore, MLD prior to surgery resulted in a better surgical outcome: a reduced disease progression, less foot oedema and better quality of life. (*Arch Med Sci.* 2013 Jun 20;9(3):452-8.)

In another recent study compared the effect of MLD moves on the thigh on the venous blood flow on 18 healthy people and 23 with severe chronic venous

disease. It was found that either of the MLD manoeuvres increased the venous blood flow in the legs for healthy individuals and those with venous insufficiency. "Therefore, manual lymphatic drainage may be an alternative strategy for the treatment and prevention of venous stasis complications in chronic venous disease." (*Phlebology.* 2013 Aug 29.)

## continued: **Massage is sensational**

Sexual, sensual, wellness, and therapy. For the past 30 years the goal of the mainstream massage industry has been to highlight the latter two categories while downplaying the first two in an attempt to create as much distance as possible between massage and any hint of prostitution. In the process, the fact that, first and foremost, massage feels good has got lost. That is unfortunate because, as science is now discovering, feeling good is probably one of the best things that we can do for our ongoing health and well being.

Learning how to stimulate a parasympathetic (relaxation) response, as massage does quickly and so effectively, is crucial to the daily health and renewal of virtually every physiological system in our bodies, not to mention the maintenance of a healthy psycho-social balance.

"Massage is not just pampering," popular magazine headlines try to convince us. I say, what's wrong with pampering if it boosts the immune system, lowers blood pressure, reduces stress hormones, increases oxytocin and heightens heart rate variability, a marker of parasympathetic response? A simple, caring massage is also an unconditional validation of my existence that nurtures both internal and external empathy. What's not to like?

All massage is sensational. It makes us feel more and it makes us feel better. What a gift is the massage that banishes the numbness with which we armour our bodies and our spirits. Let us [celebrate the sensational essence of massage](#) and start making those videos."