

## What is new at Touching Well?

This year I expanded my practice into Germany, I gave a few treatments of Arvigo Techniques of Maya Abdominal Therapy™ while visiting Hamburg. Getting a massage table to Hamburg was no mean feat, the measurements and weight were only just below the baggage allowance.

As a lymphoedema therapist I see clients where the treatment can make a huge difference to their life. One such person is Naomi, here is her story (slightly abbreviated):

*"I was diagnosed with lobular breast cancer in December 2012 and had a lumpectomy in January 2013. As the cancer had spread to my lymph nodes I had 6 sessions of FEC-T chemotherapy, followed by removal of my lymph nodes and a course of radiotherapy. My breast remained swollen throughout the year but it was after radiotherapy that the oedema worsened drastically. My breast was just so swollen. It felt twice the size of the other breast and was hard, painful and heavy. When I walked it kind of sloshed! I had a lot of scarring from surgery and the lymph fluid didn't drain away. The advice from the Breast Institute was that it could take a couple of years to settle down and they offered me no further help. There was no service for this at the Breast Institute and no suggestion that I should be referred on anywhere. I was in so much pain and discomfort I honestly felt that I couldn't live like that. I started doing research and found that leaving lymphoedema untreated is the worst thing you can do and that this can lead to further complications.*

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*I found Regina's website and emailed her in the middle of the night when I felt like I was going mad with the discomfort and pain. I arranged an appointment and didn't know what to expect. Regina immediately put me at ease, especially given the sensitive nature of the area she was going to treat. After the first treatment I found relief from the pain and discomfort and my breast no longer felt hard and heavy. The treatment itself was very relaxing and Regina was very thoughtful, caring and encouraging. In fact she was an absolute delight as a person - very warm, respectful and so knowledgeable. We tried different treatments and found Deep Oscillation combined with MLD and lymphoedema taping was most effective in treating the oedema.*

*For me Regina has been a life saver. My quality of life had become very poor following breast cancer with all the post surgery complications and the long term side effects of cancer treatments. I had a particularly difficult time of both surgery and chemotherapy and I had become very weak. I had very little movement in my shoulders and I couldn't straighten my arms. I had had cording with each surgery and the NHS had only been able to offer me one post surgery appointment with the physio. Regina used gentle*

*massage and stretching to help me regain mobility and movement and I now have a good range of movement in my arm and shoulder."*

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Wishing you a spring in your step,

*Regina Dengler*

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## Massage for nursing students

Studies have shown that massage is safe and effective for stress reduction, relaxation, pain relief, ease fatigue, and generally improving quality of life. However, it is no longer on the curriculum of nursing students. This study examines how two different kinds of massage (low and high intensity) affect the attitude of nursing students towards touch for their self-care and patient care. Twenty-nine nursing students received brief seated massages, either low or high intensity first. Just over a third of students felt better after the low intensity massage, but more than 60% felt better after the firmer massage (pressure 6.7 out of 10). Significantly more improvement was reported for energy, pain, stress, and feeling physically uptight after high-intensity compared with low-intensity. Participants were more likely to both receive touch for self-care and provide touch for patient care after experiencing high- versus low-intensity massage. (*J Altern Complement Med.* 2014 Aug 20)

This study shows that these nursing students expected seated massage with more pressure, and responded well to it. However, some people need massage with lower pressure, and if that is the case, then they respond well to that, too. What is truly astounding is that two brief massages, one with low and one with higher pressure, not only helped students feel better, but also influenced their attitude towards touch for their patients.

## Acupressure at work

Does Acupressure help with lower back pain for nurses working in A&E? A recent study looked at this, comparing acupressure, sham treatment (laser “acupuncture” with laser turned off – ingenious) and



placebo, 15 staff in each group. It appears that lower back pain was made worse by lifting or moving patients manually (surprise, surprise), with 44% of nurses being on pain medication. The acupressure really helped pain, with an 86% reduction in the pain level. (*Rev Esc Enferm USP.* 2014 Aug;48(4):670-676.)

## Pressure matters

Most on-site massage clients prefer moderate pressure (probably about the same as the firm pressure in the above study). You might be interested to know what the research, here summarised by Tiffany Field from the Touch Research Institute, tells us about moderate pressure massage: “Moderate pressure massage has contributed to many positive effects including increased weight gain in preterm infants, reduced pain in different syndromes including fibromyalgia and rheumatoid arthritis, enhanced attentiveness, reduced depression and enhanced immune function (increased natural killer cells and natural killer cell activity). [...] When moderate and light pressure massage have been compared in laboratory studies, moderate pressure massage reduced depression, anxiety and heart rate, and it altered EEG patterns, as in a relaxation response. Moderate pressure massage has also led to increased vagus nerve activity (and thus to lowered heart rate and blood pressure) and decreased cortisol levels. Functional magnetic resonance imaging data have suggested that moderate pressure massage was represented in several brain regions including the amygdala, the hypothalamus and the anterior cingulate cortex, all areas involved in stress and emotion regulation. Further research is needed to identify underlying neurophysiological and biochemical mechanisms associated with moderate pressure massage.”

(*Complement Ther Clin Pract.* 2014 Aug 1).

## What helps with period pain?

When you have period pain, you may instinctively rub or hold your belly. A hot water bottle can also bring relief, as the warmth helps to ease the spasm possibly responsible for the pain. Another way to address period pain is with a session of Maya Abdominal therapy, plus regular self massage of your belly (you will be shown how).

According to recent research self massage is even more powerful if you add a few drops of pure rose oil. To reap the benefits you need to keep going for more than one cycle. (*J Obstet Gynaecol.* 2014 Sep 25:1-4 ).

Acupressure can also help, particularly if you also have lower back pain during menstruation. This is based on a study of 129 students, half received 30 minutes acupressure massage 3 times a week, the other half were given a manual on menstrual health education. The women in the massage



group received acupressure on points associated with dysmenorrhea (period pain), that is Spleen 6 (see picture), Bladder 32 and Liver 3. (Do not use

these points in pregnancy!). Even after 12 months the women who had received acupressure reported less period and lower back pain than those who did not get massage. (*Pain Manag Nurs.* 2014 Aug 27). You can reach all these points yourself, why not give it a go. Alternatively, let me know if you suffer with painful menstruation, then we can integrate some pain relief into the massage.

You could also try auricular (on or behind the ear) acupressure to help with period pain, particularly if you are stressed. (*Evid Based Complement Alternat Med.* 2013;2013:138537). I love having my ears massaged, I find that surprisingly relaxing, clients either love it –

most of them – or hate it. No wonder auricular acupressure helps with stress.

## Breast Cancer and massage

A number of studies were published recently to examine the effect of massage and aromatherapy on people undergoing treatment for breast cancer. Massage, aromatherapy in particular, was shown to improve the quality of life and the severity of psychological and physical symptoms. (*Int J Nurs Pract.* 2014 Aug;20(4):408-17 ).

Foot massage has been shown to aid with pain relief after breast surgery. 35 very recently operated upon patients were given a foot massage when they experienced pain, and 35 patients served as a control group. The patients who received a foot massage reported less pain, as well as lower blood pressure and respiration rate for up to 2 hours afterwards (they did not measure for longer than that). (*Pain Manag Nurs.* 2014 Jun;15(2):458-65).

Massage also improved the quality of sleep in patients undergoing chemotherapy during breast cancer treatment. (*Iran J Nurs Midwifery Res.* 2014 Mar;19(2):113-8).

## Massage your pecs

Here is a novel suggestion for women who have pain during breast feeding: it could be tension in their pectoral (chest) muscles that constricts nerves and blood vessels supplying the breast. (*J Hum Lact.* 2014 May 29;30(3):287-291).

## How do you experience massage?

This, and similar questions were explored with nine women who received ten 10-15 minute massages 3 times per week to prevent high blood pressure. The women identified six different benefits, including relaxation, sleeping better, reduction of anxiety and tension, reduction of fatigue, invigorating experience, improve connecting. (*Iran J Nurs Midwifery Res.* 2014 Jul;19(4):390-5).



### MLD for high heels?

I have not taken to high heels, I guess my bunions made that decision easier. I also thought that I am vertically so challenged that no heel height could elevate me to a lofty average. Given the potential problems, I am glad.

One of the major symptoms of women wearing high heels for a long time is leg swelling, high heels may even be a cause for venous disease. (J Vasc Surg. 2012

Oct;56(4):1039-44). A recent study explored whether MLD could alleviate the swelling. Thirty healthy women in their twenties were randomly divided into two groups; one received 15 minute manual lymph drainage, the other served as a control group. Swelling was measured before wearing 10 cm high heels, after one-hour of wearing the high heels, and wearing the high heels for one hour after MLD. It was found that the leg volume went up after wearing high heels for one hour, regardless of the treatment. However, the swelling went down quicker in the MLD group. This needs more research. (Technol Health Care. 2014;22(3):309-15). As the muscle pump of the leg is not working as effectively while wearing high heels, MLD would compensate for this by encouraging lymph flow.

### Deep Oscillation for wounds

I get quite a few clients post surgery for MLD and Deep Oscillation, and generally find that they feel a lot better after the treatment. I reckon that this due to a reduction of swelling and fluid in the tissues. A recent study of patients who had surgery to fix a fracture had less pain after seven daily Deep Oscillation treatments, compared to a group of similar patients who received “normal care”. (Z Orthop Unfall. 2014 Jun;152(3):260-4).

### Stress can lead to in fertility

Recent studies have found that stress can lead to infertility, both for women (Hum Reprod. 2014 May;29(5):1067-75) and for men (Andrologia. 2014 Mar 26). High levels of pre-conception stress more than double the chances of a woman failing to get pregnant after 12 months of trying. Scientists measured levels of alpha-amylase, and enzyme in saliva that is proven biological indicator for stress. Women with high levels of the biomarker were 29% less likely to get pregnant than those with low levels. There are many ways to de-stress, some of them healthy: such as exercise massage or MLD, or not so good in the long term, such as alcohol.

#### Recent feedback

*Thank you for working on my feet yesterday, I am truly walking on air today. The dogs and I enjoyed a very early, long walk through the forest and my feet didn't hurt once!*

Annette Pennington, Rainworth

*I arrived having had a stiff, painful neck for quite a time. I had one treatment, and I was really impressed with the result, no more pain or discomfort. I was a little skeptical about No-Hands massage, but I am converted to its effectiveness.*

Jenny South, West Bridgford, Nottingham

*The world slows down when I come here.*  
Hazel K, Beeston, Nottingham

Naomi's story continued from page 1:

*“If you are struggling with lymphoedema of any kind or are having any problems post surgery with mobility difficulties, I can wholeheartedly recommend her. She is much more knowledgeable than many of the health professionals and is very easy to be with. She is warm, caring, thoughtful and encouraging. It is thanks to Regina that I am no longer in constant pain and I feel confident that I can manage the debilitating and under recognised condition that is lymphoedema.”*

