

A randomised study of the effects of massage therapy compared to guided relaxation on well-being and stress perception among older adults.

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Summary

Objective

The objective was to assess the effects of massage compared to guided relaxation on stress perception and well-being among older adults.

Design

A randomised pilot study enrolled adults ages 60 and older to receive 50 min, twice weekly massage therapy or guided relaxation sessions. Questionnaires were administered at pre-test (1 week before the first session) and post-test (after the last

session).

Setting

Participants came to the University of South Carolina campus for sessions. Adults aged 60 and older were recruited from community venues and were briefly screened by telephone for contraindications.

Intervention

Participants ($n = 54$) received 50 min massage or guided relaxation sessions twice weekly for 4 weeks. The massage included Swedish, neuromuscular, and myofascial techniques. For the relaxation group, an appropriately trained assistant read a script to guide the participant in using visualization and muscle relaxation.

Main outcome measures

The General Well-being Schedule is an 18-item scale with subscales measuring anxiety, depression, positive well-being, self-control, vitality, and general health.

The Perceived Stress Scale is a 14-item scale assessing the degree to which situations in one's life are appraised as stressful during the past month.

Results

Significant improvements were found for the anxiety, depression, vitality, general health, and positive well-being subscales of the General Well-being Schedule and for Perceived Stress among the massage participants compared to guided relaxation.

Conclusions

Findings indicate that massage therapy enhances positive well-being and reduces stress perception among community-dwelling older adults.



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Keywords

Massage; Older adults; Stress; Well-being

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