

Winter Newsletter

At Advantage Physiotherapy we are committed to providing treatment based on the highest quality of research that is available. The winter newsletter is a compilation of current studies that look at the use of manual lymphatic drainage in lymphedema as well as orthopedic conditions. This is an overview of current randomized controlled trials available via Pub Med. At our clinic we try to view each client in a comprehensive manner.

There are different specialists that work at Advantage Physiotherapy to allow for a more global approach to client care if need be. We have three Physiotherapists, a Chiropractor, an Osteopath (Currently in Study), a Pedorthist, and a Personal Training Specialist.



1. Can manual lymphatic drainage help reduce excess limb volume in women with breast cancer-related lymphedema?

A randomized controlled crossover study of manual lymphatic drainage therapy in women with breast cancer-related lymphedema.
Williams A.F., Vadgama A., Franks P.J., Mortimer P.S.

Methods: Thirty one women with breast cancer related lymphedema were included in this randomized controlled crossover study. Researchers aimed to assess the effect of manual lymphatic drainage and simple lymphatic drainage (self help technique) on variables such as excess limb volume, dermal thickness in the upper arm, quality of life, dyspnea, sleep disturbance, and altered sensations (i.e. pain and heaviness).

Results: The manual lymphatic drainage group had significantly decreased excess limb volume and dermal thickness in the upper extremity. Patients also had improved quality of life (emotional function) and decreases in dyspnea, sleep disturbance, and altered sensations.

Conclusion: This study provides evidence for the use of manual lymphatic drainage in women with breast cancer related lymphedema.

2. Can Manual Lymphatic Drainage decrease swelling after a fracture?

Effect of manual lymph drainage as described by Vodder on edema of the hand after fracture of the distal radius: a prospective clinical study.
Haren K., Backman C., Wiberg M

Methods: Twenty six patients with a fracture of the distal radius that was treated by external fixation were randomized into an experimental and control group. All patients had the same conventional treatment that included exercises, movement, edema control and education. Additionally, the experimental group also received 10 treatments of manual lymphatic drainage. Edema was measured at four different intervals and was compared against the uninjured hand using a volumeter.

Results: The experimental group had significantly less edema in the injured hand.

Conclusion: Manual lymphatic drainage is a useful method in reducing post-traumatic edema in the hand.

Manual Lymphatic Drainage is a very specific directional massage technique. Valerie Brouwers (registered physiotherapist) has training in this treatment and is able to show people how to do self massage as well. While it is very helpful in lymphedema it also has value in other conditions such as post trauma (fracture and sprains) or more chronic conditions such as chronic neck stiffness or headaches



3. Can lymphedema in the arm lead to future incidence of shoulder trauma?

Severe lymphedema of the arm as a potential cause of shoulder trauma.
Avrahami R., Gabbay E., Bsharah B., Haddad M., Koren A., Dahn J., Zelikovsky A.

Methods: Ten women aged 58-81 years with arm lymphedema after breast cancer surgery were included in the study. All patients developed shoulder pain, and were subsequently followed up with and assessed to determine the extent of injury (using ultrasound) as well as severity of upper limb lymphedema. Results were compared to the unaffected arm. Patients were then treated using manual lymphatic drainage and intermittent sessions of pneumatic compression.

Results: Five patients developed a tear in the supraspinatus muscle, and five had a chronic bursitis. Of note is that the unaffected arm showed no signs of pathology. The mean volume of lymphedema in the affected arm was 568ml greater than in the unaffected arm. Treatment led to an average decrease in arm volume of 170ml with improvements in arm mobility and shoulder pain.

Conclusion: Severe lymphedema can result in shoulder trauma, pain and disability. Proper physiotherapy treatment can reduce these effects.

*Please note- This article is not a randomized controlled trial and it is our belief that based on the methodology, the conclusions of the authors may be slightly skewed. Nonetheless it is important to consider this research as an important addition to the limited literature available on manual lymphatic drainage.

4. Can manual lymphatic drainage be used to help decrease chronic tension-type headaches?

Non Conventional chronic tension-type headache treatment with manual lymphatic drainage.
Longo C., Rizzo R., Inzitari M.T., Scumaci G., Caroleo S., Iocco M.

Methods: Chronic tension-type headache is a disorder with daily or very frequent episodes of headaches lasting minutes to days and on 15 or more days a month (about 180 days/year) for at least three months. Patients with chronic tension-type headaches were treated using manual lymphatic drainage.

Results: Patients treated with manual lymphatic drainage reported a reduction in pain frequency and intensity.

Conclusion: Manual lymphatic drainage can help to reduce pain frequency and intensity in people who suffer from chronic tension-type headaches.

*Please note- Although this article is not a randomized controlled trial it can be still be considered a valued addition to the literature, and can be used as a starting point for further research.

There is limited research available in this field and more research is warranted.

At Advantage Physiotherapy we are proud that we book assessments for one hour and treatments for thirty minutes for more one on one time with the physiotherapist.

Our treatment is goal oriented and patient centered.