

- Title** Deep Tissue Massage as a Complementary Therapy for Musculoskeletal Pain
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- Reference** Technology Review Report - 003/2015, online:  
[http://www.moh.gov.my/index.php/database\\_stores/store\\_view\\_page/30/260](http://www.moh.gov.my/index.php/database_stores/store_view_page/30/260)

**Aim**

To assess the effectiveness, safety and cost-effectiveness of deep tissue massage as a complementary therapy for musculoskeletal pain.

**Conclusions and results**

There was limited fair level of retrievable evidence to suggest that deep tissue massage may be effective in reducing pain in patients with chronic low back pain. Visual Analogue Score (VAS) score difference was found statistically higher in deep tissue massage plus lumbar traction group compared to the lumbar traction only group ( $1.9 \pm 0.9$  versus  $1.4 \pm 0.8$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ). There were also statistically significant differences in Modified Oswestry Low Back Pain Disability Index (ODI), Quebec Back Pain Disability Scale (QBPD) and VAS score after deep tissue massage in patients with chronic low back pain [ODI  $P < 0.001$ ; QBPD  $P < 0.001$ ; VAS  $P < 0.001$ ]. However, there was a case report of spinal accessory neuropathy and two patients in another study experienced worsening of the low back pain after deep tissue massage. There was no retrievable evidence from the scientific databases on the cost-effectiveness of this technology.

**Recommendations (if any)**

Based on the above review, there was insufficient evidence to recommend deep tissue massage as a complementary therapy for chronic low back pain. However, deep tissue massage may be used as a complementary therapy for low back pain in a research environment provided patients are referred by clinicians and the deep tissue massage should be conducted by trained personnel.

**Methods**

Electronic databases were searched, which included PubMed, Medline, Journal @ Ovid full text via OVID, OVID EBM Reviews - Cochrane central register of controlled trials, EBM Reviews - Cochrane database of systematic review and from non-scientific database - Google search engine. In addition, a cross-referencing of the articles retrieved was also carried out accordingly to the topic. Relevant articles were critically appraised and evidence graded using NHS Centre for Reviews and Dissemination (CRD) University of York, Report Number 4 (2nd Edition)

**Further research/reviews required****Written by**

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