

# **DOES DEEP TISSUE MASSAGE THERAPY HAVE AN IMPACT ON BODY DIMENSIONS IN THE HIPS AND THIGHS OF WOMEN?**

By Charles W. Wiltsie, III, LMT, NCTMB

I was watching the local news one night after work. There was a story about a plastic surgeon claiming he could reduce body dimension in women with the use of a vacuum cleaner roller-like device. The video clip pictured a woman about 30 years old lying on a massage-like table. As she lay there, the plastic surgeon was rolling the device across her buttocks and abdomen. As he rolled across the targeted areas, I noticed that there seems to be a strong suction pulling her skin into the head. His claim was that, by using this machine, he could help people lose inches without requiring the subject to diet or exercise.

As I watched this report, I had two immediate reactions. First, I thought this was a ridiculous idea. This plastic surgeon was feeding on the patients' vanity and was unconcerned with health. I felt the same way I do when I see many of my female performing-artist clients have liposuction. I felt it was contributing to the national inferiority complex American women have about their bodies. Secondly, I thought this looked a lot like the massage technique known as "skin rolling." It's when I began to ponder my second response that lights began going off in my head. I knew massage therapy helped with muscle tone, lymphatic drainage, and circulation. Even though I objected viscerally to this plastic surgeon's dimension loss program, at the same time I wondered if he was onto something.

On a personal note, I had been looking for something to study. I have the strong belief that for everything studied in the field of traditional medicine, there is a better answer on the holistic side of things. It has always been rumored that massage therapy could with cellulite. I wanted to know for sure. My reason was simple. The alternative health field has a duty to study everything allopaths study. It is not because we need to "compete" with them, but because we need to open the door and expose our world, through good research, to everyone. We need to take the risk and prove that we are wrong—or maybe even right.

## **ABSTRACT**

This study set out to find if deep tissue massage has an impact on the soft tissue of women between the ages of 35 and 50. Review of the study results will show that 95% of women who participated in this study had a significant loss of dimension without gaining or losing weight.

## **ABOUT THIS STUDY**

This study dealt with the effect of deep tissue massage on the lower trunk and mid-to-upper thighs of women between the ages of 35 and 50. I picked this part of the body because of its relationship to waste. In other words, this part of the body has lots of fatty tissue, the lymphatic system, and visceral organs which eliminate waste. This part of the body also has some of the largest muscles in the body. Any effect on muscle tone would be clearly measurable, as it would be on the elimination of waste in the organs and the other tissue in the area.

The women in this study could not be grossly overweight and could not be sedentary. They had to be people of steady habits. They could not have had a baby within three years of the study and could not have any contraindication to deep tissue massage therapy. Each went through a three-part screening process. One hundred women were selected.

After selection, these study participants committed to 20 minutes of massage 3 times per week for 6 weeks. They were measured and weighed every session. At every fourth session, the targeted areas were photographed. The photographs were of the front, right side, back, and left side of the targeted areas. Each study participant was measured using the imperial system of measurement (inches).

There were five measurements taken. Measurement 1 was at the navel. Measurement 2 was halfway between the navel and the proximal head of the greater trochanter. Measurement 3 was at the proximal head of the greater trochanter. Measurement 4 was half the distance from the proximal head of the greater trochanter and the

suprapatella on the right on and left thigh. Measurement 5 was one-quarter the distance from the proximal head of the greater trochanter and the suprapatella on the right and left thigh. These landmarks were identified using palpation. The controller was the “weigh-in” each session. If the study participant’s weight went up or down more than half to 1 pound, an explanation was required. Also, the participant would note when she menstruated, or any other changes during the study period: including diarrhea, constipation, etc. The massage techniques used during the study were picked to stimulate circulation, and affect the lymphatic system. These techniques were performed at specific times during the study period and were done the same way on each study participant. The techniques used were tapotement, deep kneading, skin rolling, and effleurage.

## **RESULTS**

The results of the study were significant. In reporting my results, however, there needs to be some qualification. First, these results are averages. Some women had changes more significant than the averages, and some women less significant. Secondly, 5% of the study participants actually went up in dimension. It should also be noted that for the purposes of this report, I have rounded the numbers up to the nearest ¼ inch. Thirdly, I am not noting here what age groups seemed to go up or down more or less, and I did no follow-up after the study period was over. Fourth, since the initial study was complete, I have continued studying women of different age groups and for different lengths of time. The results of these new groups are similar, but not exactly the same. Finally, here I am simply presenting the results of the study. I kept the study simple. I can report my findings, but cannot explain physiologically what happened. I believe that in the field of alternative health that, while we need to do studies, it is important to do our studies simply. So much of what we do is intuitive and that aspect must be left out when we report our findings.

### **Average loss of dimension for all 100 women:**

- Measurement 1: ¾ inches
- Measurement 2: 1 ¼ inches
- Measurement 3: ¾ inches

#### **Right leg:**

- Measurement 4: 1 ½ inches
- Measurement 5: ½ inch

#### **Left leg:**

- Measurement 4: 1 ¼ inches
- Measurement 5: ½ inch

Also, each study participant maintained her weight for the duration of the study—95% of study participants did not go up or down in weight more than 1 pound.

## **CONCLUSION**

My conclusion is simply that nearly 95% of the study participants lost dimension in the targeted areas. The “why” is a subjective conclusion. Subjectively, I think the people in this study lost dimension because the massage techniques used worked favorably on lymphatic drainage, muscle tone, and circulation.

## **WHY DO A STUDY?**

The question for massage therapists is: “Why do a study?” For this study, I had no grant money of any kind. I was all my own time, my own film, and my own lat nights on the computer figuring out numbers and drawing conclusions. Why do it? It’s likely that anyone who initiates a study will have their results challenged, or their methods questioned. But, in the end, who cares? If my study is criticized or refuted, it does not matter. What matters is that if a study is refuted or its methods challenged, it is done so with more studies and research. Each of us initiating research helps the cause of alternative health. Each time one of us publishes a paper, it helps the mission which is to forward the cause of real health.

During my study, many of the participants were upset with the look of their bodies. Many were on the brink of liposuction. These were healthy, fit women worried about their thighs and the size of their buttocks. By the end of the study, these people were pleased with the results. But let’s face it. While these women lost dimension, they didn’t look that much different. What they noticed was how they felt having been massaged. They felt better.

Many of them began visiting chiropractors, naturopaths, and other massage therapists. Not one went for liposuction. They were beginning to get it, and each time one of us publishes a paper, a few more people “get it,” understanding the benefits associated with alternative modalities *Charles W. Wiltsie III* is a *Connecticut* state licensed massage therapist and is nationally certified in therapeutic massage and bodywork. He is an approved Category A provider of Continuing Education by the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork.

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## **Another Paper on the Research That Lead to Lypossage**

# **DOES DEEP TISSUE MASSAGE HAVE AN IMPACT ON DIMENSION IN THE HIPS AND THIGHS?**

A Study Done By Charles W. Wiltsie III, LMT, NCTMB

## **INTRODUCTION**

Does deep tissue massage have an impact on the hips and thighs? It is common knowledge that massage therapy helps with circulation, muscle tone, and lymphatic drainage. It is also known that people with Lymphoedema are positively affected with Complex Physical Therapy (CPT) and Manual Lymphatic Drainage (MLD). Lymphoedema is defined as “a chronic condition with no known cure,” that, “can have profound physical and psychological impact on affected patients...Lymphoedema is swelling, usually in the extremity, which may result from an accumulation of interstitial fluid caused by impaired lymphatic drainage.”<sup>i[i]</sup>

There is much documentation that indicates massage positively influences Lymphoedema. One of the therapeutic approaches to this is a “combination of compression, exercise and if possible, massage.”<sup>ii[ii]</sup>

These types of approaches are part of CPT. CPT is “a technique of manual lymphatic drainage, compression bandaging and specific physical therapy exercises.”<sup>iii[iii]</sup> In the article, “Using Massage in the Relief of Lymphoedema,” it is stated that “massage is one of the cornerstones of treatment”<sup>iv[iv]</sup> for Lymphoedema. Another study done at Slade Hospital in Oxford, England showed the “effect of massage as a stimulus to lymph flow[...] local massage significantly enhanced clearance.”<sup>v[v]</sup> With this information, it seemed reasonable to try to discover the exact effects of deep tissue massage techniques on healthy female participants.

The intention was to influence muscle tone, circulation, and lymphatic drainage through deep tissue massage techniques that were specific to target areas. These areas would demonstrate, or not demonstrate, that these techniques reduce dimension.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The target areas were the lower trunk and mid to upper. These parts of the body were picked because of their relationship to waste. In other words, these parts of the body have a lot of fatty tissue, lymphatic system, and visceral organs that eliminate waste. In addition, these parts of the body also have some of the largest muscles in the body. Any effect on the muscle tone in these parts of the body would be clearly measurable, as would the effects it has on the elimination of waste in the organs and other tissue in these parts.

The women in this study were between the ages of 35 and 50. They could not be grossly overweight and could not be sedentary.

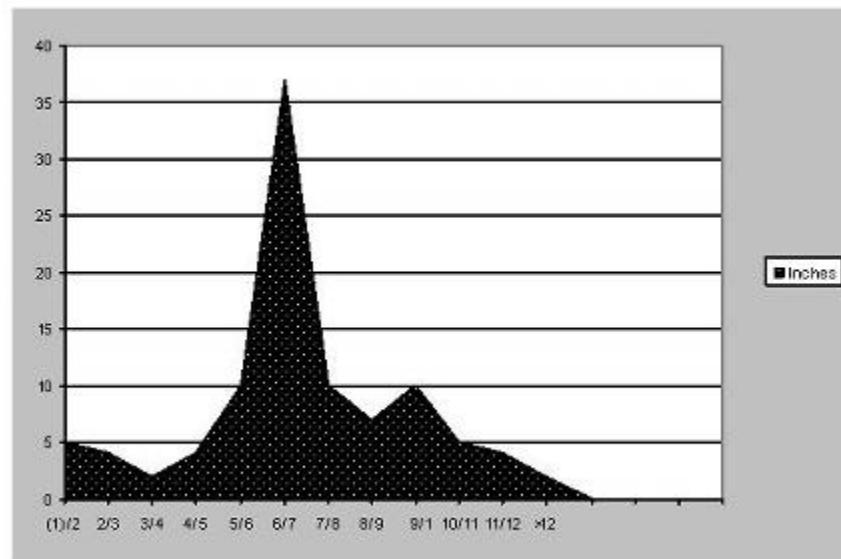
They had to be people of steady habits. They could not have had a baby within three years of the study and could not have any contraindication to deep tissue massage therapy. Each went through a three-part screening process. One hundred women were selected.

After selection, the study participants committed to 20 minutes of massage 3 times per week for 6 weeks. Every fourth session, the targeted areas on the study participants were photographed. The photographs were of the front, the right side, the back, and the left side of the targeted areas. The study participants were weighed and measured every session. The imperial system of measurement (inches) was used for the following five measurement points:

- Measurement 1 was at the navel.
- Measurement 2 was halfway between the navel and the proximal head of the greater trochanter.
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- Measurement 4 was half the distance from the proximal head of the greater trochanter and the suprapatella on the right on and left thigh.
- Measurement 5 was one-quarter the distance from the proximal head of the greater trochanter and the suprapatella on the right and left thigh.

The controller was the “weigh-in” at each session. If the study participant’s weight went up or down more than half to 1 pound, an explanation was required. Also, the participant would note when she had her period or any other changes: such as diarrhea, or constipation.



Each study participant maintained her weight for the duration of the study. Ninety-five percent of the study participants did not go up or down in weight more than one pound.

Since the completion of the initial study, other studies have been done with a variety of age groups and study periods. The results of these new studies are similar to the initial study, and therefore reinforce the findings of the initial study.

## CONCLUSION

Deep tissue massage does have an impact on the hips and thighs. More importantly, deep tissue massage had an impact on the attitudes of the women in the study. At the beginning, many of the women were upset with the look of their bodies and were considering liposuction. By the end of the study, these particular women were pleased with the results. What the women noticed was how massage made them *feel*. They felt better. Many of them began visiting chiropractors, naturopaths, and other massage therapists. None of these women went for liposuction. Each time one of us publishes a paper a few more people will understand the benefits associated with alternative modalities.

## WHY DO A STUDY?

When I did this study, I had no grant money of any kind. It was my own time, my own Polaroid film, and my own late nights on the computer figuring out numbers and drawing conclusions. Why do it? It is likely each of us who does a study will have our results challenged or our methods questioned. If my results are challenged or my methods questioned, it doesn't matter. What matters is that if a study's results are challenged, that they are done so with more studies and research. Each of us who does research helps the cause of alternative health. Each time one of us publishes a paper, we help our mission, which is to forward the cause of real health.

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