



Submitted by:

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Proposed Position Statement

It is the position of the American Massage Therapy Association that massage therapy may help reduce pain associated with osteoarthritis of the knee.

Summary Rationale

Arthritis is acute or chronic inflammation of one or more joints, usually accompanied by pain and stiffness. Osteoarthritis is the most common form of arthritis and is generally considered wear and tear of the joints. It involves the breakdown of the cartilage within the joint causing it to become stiff and more susceptible to damage. When there is significant enough wear of the cartilage joint replacement is often indicated. Osteoarthritis is more often found in weight bearing joints like the knees and hips but can occur anywhere. Those most likely to develop osteoarthritis of the knee are athletes playing high impact sports such as soccer, tennis or football and people who work on their knees such as carpet layers. Other contributing factors include age, obesity, injuries and family history.

Osteoarthritis affects approximately 27 million Americans. It is anticipated that by 2020 more than 50 million Americans will have osteoarthritis and that the cost to health care will be over 60 billion dollars.

Massage therapy has been shown to be helpful with many musculoskeletal conditions. Studies show that it increases local circulation to joints, improves muscle tone around a joint, enhances flexibility and reduces pain. Recent studies conducted for NCCIH (National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health) and using between 85-222 adults with osteoarthritis, determined that with 8 weeks of Swedish massage, one hour per week, participants showed significant reductions in pain and improvements in mobility.

As osteoarthritis is on the rise, it is important for massage therapists to consider this condition when networking with health care providers and as they attempt to address client needs. The AMTA currently references the benefits of massage therapy for osteoarthritis in MTJ Winter 2017, in the client handout: Massage Therapy + Osteoarthritis of the Knee and in the on-line continuing education course Massage Therapy for Osteoarthritis.

Having a document like an AMTA position statement that clearly lists the supporting research and results of that research will further provide massage therapists the information they need to clearly communicate our role in helping to relieve the pain associated with osteoarthritis. This will be beneficial as they discuss the role of massage therapy with physicians, physical therapists and others within the healthcare field. It will also enable massage therapists to clearly discuss and market the benefits of therapeutic massage to current and potential clients. There is ample current research to support such a statement.