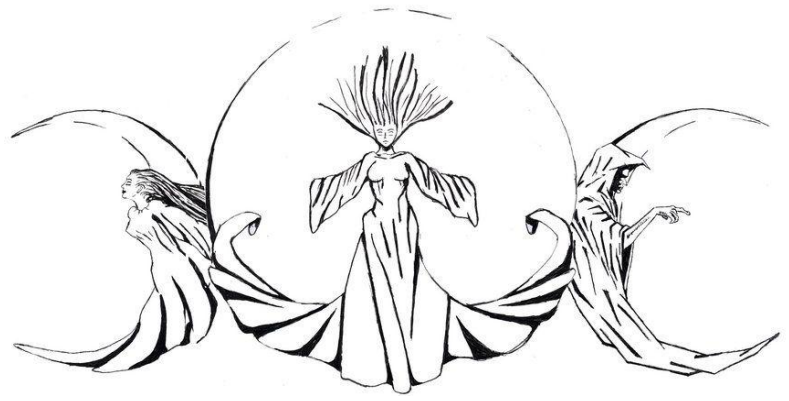


THCC: WORKING WITH THE ELDERLY

THE CRONE





ELDER CARE

ELDER BOOM & ELDER CARE

“People getting older is not a crisis; it’s a blessing.”

Ai-jen Poo, *The Age of Dignity*

- We have more senior citizens in the US than any other time in our history. 4 million people turn 65 each year.
- Because of advances in healthcare and technology, people are living longer than ever.
- By 2050, the total # of people needing long-term care and personal assistance: 12 million → 27 million.
- Home caregiving fastest growing occupation in the nation: most eldercare workers are low-income African American and immigrant women.

NEED FOR MASSAGE

Compassion v. sympathy/pity

Required by law not to over-medicate their patients, more and more skilled nursing facilities are seeking alternative therapies to reduce use of pain medication - great need for caring, healing touch.

Elders who are bed-bound may be touch-deprived.

Touch can be more effective than words, especially when working with Alzheimer's clients.

Touch can bring comfort, soothe, revitalize, a sense of connection, and peace.

Massage is becoming the most requested integrative therapy in hospice and palliative care.

BENEFITS OF MASSAGE FOR ELDERS

- Lessen use of certain medications
- Ease discomfort of bedsores caused by sitting or lying in one position for an extended time
- Ease pain and anxiety
- Encourage overall well-being
- Help with stiff, sore muscles
- Improve flexibility
- Relieve constipation
- Alleviate symptoms of depression
- Salve for the body and soul
- Suffer from loneliness, lack of connection
- **Touch communicates in a way that language may fail – can be more effective than words**

TOUCH FOR FRAIL CLIENTS

Palliative care & complementary care

Caring doesn't necessarily mean "fixing" anyone - being present, acknowledging the wholeness of the person no matter their circumstances

We are touching both their frailty and strength/resilience

Grounded in own body - adapt to medical and home settings: your physical comfort is integral to the quality of touch you give

It is OK to work primarily where you have the easiest access, for example hands and feet - simplicity

You can safely touch even the frailest person by using broad, encompassing contact pressure

CHALLENGES

In assisted living homes and skilled nursing facilities,

- Loss and death
- Sometimes clients not feeling well enough for a massage
- Forget an appointment
- Agitated
- Roommates or family members being loud

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION

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- How do I feel about my own aging and about the aging of my loved ones?
- How do I feel about the physical aspects of growing older and becoming more frail and dependent on others?
- How do I feel about becoming fond of someone and then losing them? Am I able to separate the two? Am I able to see the greater value in helping to facilitate healing and peace for someone during the final stage in their life over my own feelings of sadness and loss? Or is the emotional loss more overpowering?

EFFECTS OF AGING

INTEGUMENTARY SYSTEM

Skin changes that occur with
age

- Epidermis becomes thinner: more prone to infection, injury and delayed healing
 - Elastin fibers decrease
 - weaker skin that may wrinkle and sag
 - Glandular secretions decrease: more easily affected by changes in environmental temperature, drier skin
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OUR OUTER SURFACE

- Melanocytes decrease in number
 - pigment changes
- Decrease in production of vitamin D leading to fragile bones
- Thinning hair
- Nail growth slows

Skin is the surface of the brain
“pressing mine to yours”

Skin is largest sensor that informs
mind about external environment

Reduce brain’s perception of pain:
psychological and physiological

SKELETAL SYSTEM

- Characterized by slower movement, weakness and altered physical appearance
- Shrink due to shortening of vertebral column
- Fat redistributed, less in extremities - bony landmarks more prominent with deepening hollows in axilla, shoulders, ribs, eyes

SKELETAL SYSTEM & AGING

- Ground substance in relation to the collagen fibers, is reduced in the tissue, causing stiffness of ligaments and joints
- Production of synovial fluid in joints decreases
- Hardening of tendons results in mild flexion of the vertebrae, hips, knees, elbows, wrists and neck
- Slowing of bone formation, loss of bone mass & weakening structure (osteoporosis), more risk of fractures
- Osteoarthritis

MUSCULAR SYSTEM

- Slower movement, weakness & altered appearance largely result of changes in muscular system
 - Muscles decrease in size: loss & atrophy of fibers
 - Loss of motor units
 - Replaced with less elastic fibrous tissue
 - Decrease strength and endurance
-

MUSCULAR SYSTEM & AGING

- Changes in muscle function may be attributed to effects of age on the nervous system
- Ligaments and joints stiffen
- May need to use **less pressure**
 - Reduced bulk
 - Possible osteoporotic changes in bone
- **Do not forcibly increase joint movements**
- **Be patient**
 - Expect slower response when request change positions on table
 - May need extra pillows to position clients with joint stiffness

NERVOUS SYSTEM AND AGING

- Steady loss of neurons in the brain and spinal cord, reduced synaptic connections, neurotransmitter synthesis & secretion
- Results in diminished reflexes and slower reaction time
- Decreased balance
- May affect short-term memory
- Thinking and cognition — generally remain intact

NERVOUS SYSTEM

- Change in proprioception
 - Balance is maintained by integration of input from vision, touch-pressure sensations, joint position sense, vestibular apparatus, and hearing
 - If input is not well synthesized, dizziness, light-headedness and falls may occur
- Sight & hearing ability may diminish gradually and progressively
- Poor thermoregulation: Changes in muscle and gland response to ANS affects reflexes & vascular changes in accordance to environmental temperature: higher rate of hypothermia and hyperthermia - temp regulation is impaired

LYMPHATIC SYSTEM & IMMUNITY

- Resistance to all types of infection is decreased
 - Autoimmune diseases may increase
 - Natural killer cell activity decreases
 - Both T & B lymphocytes become less responsive to antigens
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CARDIOVASCULAR SYSTEM

- Part of the bone marrow is replaced with connective tissue and fat, slowing down production of RBCs
- Tendency for blood to clot due to more platelet activity
- Total blood cholesterol tends to increase – more susceptible to thickening and stiffening of vessel walls
(atherosclerosis)

CARDIOVASCULAR SYSTEM & AGING

- Size of heart decreases, valves thicken, contraction force decreases, reducing blood flow to organs
- Aorta becomes less elastic - needing greater pressure to push blood into stiffened arteries

COMMON CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASES

- Coronary heart disease refers to a narrowing of the coronary arteries, the blood vessels that supply oxygen and blood to the heart. It is also known as coronary artery disease.
 - Coronary heart disease (CHD) normally happens when cholesterol accumulates on the artery walls, creating plaques. The arteries narrow, reducing blood flow to the heart. Sometimes, a clot can obstruct the flow of blood to the heart muscle.
 - CHD commonly causes angina pectoris (chest pain), shortness of breath, myocardial infarction, or heart attack.
- Hypertension
- Stroke

MASSAGE & CARDIOVASCULAR WELLNESS

Massage therapy helps patients with cardiac issues address some of the factors that may be contributing to their condition. In conjunction with doctor-prescribed protocols, massage also helps patients manage some of the side effects of treatment.

- Induce states of physical and mental relaxation, which can help alleviate the effects of chronic stress and anxiety on the whole body.
- Loosen tight muscles and increase blood flow, which improves overall circulation.
- Alleviate chronic pain, which helps interrupt the brain's "fight or flight" response.
- Reduce anxiety before or after surgical procedures.

RESPIRATORY SYSTEM

- Change in muscles & skeleton can decrease lung function
 - Kyphosis/scoliosis decreases respiratory movement
 - Stiffness of chest wall may result from calcification of cartilage & osteoporosis of ribs and vertebrae
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RESPIRATORY SYSTEM & AGING

- Elastic tissue in lungs alters, reduction in elastic recoil
- Alveoli have less surface areas for exchange, capillaries in alveoli decrease
- The work of breathing increases - elderly tend to rely more on movement of diaphragm than chest wall movement
- Deep breathing exercises can be helpful
- Cough reflex impaired
- Cilia decrease - less capacity to expel mucus & foreign agents
- Less antibodies - more prone to respiratory disease

DIGESTIVE SYSTEM

- 2 major changes in digestive tract:
reduction of epithelial cells & loss of neurons from walls
 - Aging affects oral cavity, esophagus, stomach, small & large intestines, pancreas and liver
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DIGESTIVE SYSTEM & AGING

- Loss of teeth & chewing impairment, reduced salivary flow, reduced sensation of smell and taste
- Atrophy of stomach mucosa, less HCl
- Villi atrophied - no evidence of nutrient absorption impairment
- Motility of colon may decrease
- Liver becomes smaller, with destruction of hepatocytes & fibrous tissue replacement - enzymes & protein synthesis diminished
- Capacity to metabolize drugs reduces with age.

URINARY SYSTEM

- Reserve capacities of kidneys decreases
 - More vulnerable to dysfunction if demands on kidneys increase (trauma or disease)
 - # nephrons decreases
 - Blood flow decreases
 - Ability to concentrate and dilute urine is diminished
 - Reduced capacity to excrete drugs
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URINARY SYSTEM & AGING

- Smooth muscle and elastic tissue degenerate, replaced by fibrous tissue - can result in decreased bladder capacity
- Increased frequency of urination
- Muscles in bladder and urethra weaken, may cause incomplete emptying of bladder
- Weakening of pelvic muscles may result in stress incontinence (leakage of small quantities when intra-abdominal pressure is increased)
- Incontinence may require catheterization or diapers.

MASSAGE SESSION CONSIDERATIONS

- Attention to thin **skin** with massage techniques
- **Elevate** upper body with a wedge if trouble breathing
- **Normalize** need for frequent urination
- Due to shift in **thermoregulation**, use hot and cold packs with care
- Adjustments for **hearing**
- May need to use **less pressure**
 - Reduced bulk
 - Possible osteoporotic changes in bone - no direct downward pressure
- **Do not forcibly increase joint movements**
- **Be patient**
 - Expect **slower response** when request change positions on table
 - May need extra pillows to position clients with joint stiffness

MASSAGE & CARDIOVASCULAR HEALTH PRECAUTIONS

While massage is generally safe and effective, there are some cautions to keep in mind when working with cardiac patients.

- Those on blood thinning drugs should avoid vigorous or deep tissue techniques, as these can cause bruising, inflammation, or tissue damage.
- Watch for dizziness for those with low blood pressure.
- Strokes towards heart.
- Therapists should avoid manipulating the area around pacemakers, stents, or other implanted devices.
- Patients with signs of congestive heart failure should start with short massages, and slowly work up to longer sessions, as tolerated.

DEMENTIA & ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

- Dementia is a group of symptoms impairing the intellect and social abilities on an individual enough to interfere with daily functioning.
 - Problems with 2 brain functions qualify as a diagnosis
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SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

- Alzheimer's is the most common type of progressive, degenerative brain disease causing dementia. Lewy body dementia and vascular dementia are the next most common.
- Loss of memory, cognition, language
- Personality changes
- Disorientation
- Behavior and mood changes: wandering, sleeplessness, anxiety, depression and agitation
- Difficulty coping with disruptions in routine

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- When possible, questions should be asked of the client. Even if they cannot accurately respond to the questions regarding their medical history, the person should be included in the process to know that their voice is valued.
- It is important that we provide a safe session, and this may often require that we also inquire with the caretaker.
- How are you feeling today? Do you have any pain?
- Would you like for me to provide you with a gentle massage? Can I start with your hands?
- Continue to inform the client of your next step and ask for permission to proceed.
- Be mindful of non-verbal cues.

INTAKE

INTERVIEW/INTAKE QUESTIONS

- Have you had a massage before?
- What brought you in for today's session?
- Tell me about your health history - any major illnesses, surgeries, injuries?
- Are you taking any medications at this time? How do they affect you?
- Are you comfortable undressing for this session or would you prefer to have a clothed session?

BENEFITS OF MASSAGE FOR SENIORS, REVISITED