

Munster Treatment Rooms

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Multiple Sclerosis (MS) & Massage

Over the years working as a Sports Massage and Physical Therapist, I have worked with some people who suffer from Multiple Sclerosis (MS). Maintaining movement and using massage techniques are really helpful in the overall treatment and care of the person.

Multiple Sclerosis is a disease that affects the nervous system, i.e. the brain and spinal cord. The brain and spinal cord are wrapped in a sheath called myelin. When this sheath becomes damaged the nervous system doesn't function properly. Our body's immune system attacks the myelin for, as yet, some unknown reason and this causes the damage.

If you could picture a copper pipe carrying hot water to your sink. The pipe is usually wrapped in spongy insulation to keep heat loss to a minimum. If that insulation becomes torn, missing or damaged, the pipe will lose some ability to keep the water hot. Imagine a nerve being like that pipe, with the spongy wrapping being the myelin, the nerve will malfunction if the myelin is damaged. This results in nerve signals not getting to their destinations and thus causes a range of problems.

An MS Sufferer can have some or all of the symptoms associated with the disease.

These include:

- Visual disturbances
- Muscle weakness
- Problems with coordination
- Problems with balance
- Speech and swallowing difficulties
- Incontinence
- Fatigue
- Memory problems
- Sensations such as pins and needles or numbness

While unfortunately, there is no cure for MS at present, research continues as to its causes and treatment and the future may be more hopeful. In the meantime, if you, or a loved one, have symptoms about which you have suspicions it is important to contact your GP, the District Nurse, the HSE or perhaps MS Society Ireland. There are several support groups which can help on a number of levels – not just for the sufferer but also families and friends.

MS Sufferers can benefit hugely from lots of physical therapy and massage and this is my particular interest. In my experience as a Sports' Massage and Physical Therapist, I have had some great results working with MS Sufferers. For example, by working with people on a daily basis rather than on a weekly basis I have achieved substantial results and the person themselves experiences some relief.

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In order to defray some of the costs of asking a professional to do work, family members and relatives can be taught how to work many of the exercises which need to be done on a daily basis. It's a good idea to set up a rota so that the workload is shared as it can be quite tiring. Though it can sometimes be frustrating and demanding to do this massage work, it is an absolute necessity as a way of treating and relieving pain and maintaining mobility etc.

While professional or family treatment is not a cure-all for MS, it certainly helps on a number of levels and is always worth pursuing as part of the overall support of the sufferer as well as keeping real contact going.

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