

Family members reduce stress in advanced cancer patients with 14 minute massages

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Advanced cancer patients who regularly received massages averaging 14 minutes or more by a partner or family member declined in stress scores over four weeks, according to results of a study reported at the 7th annual conference of the American Psychosocial Oncology Society.

In the study, sponsored by the National [Cancer](#) Institute, 97 care partners followed the instruction of a DVD program to provide massage to patients at home. The multi-ethnic sample represented 21 types of cancer (nearly half with [breast cancer](#)), over half with either stage III or IV cancer.

The study looked at the effects of massage by a care partner (spouse or family member) over four weeks. According to the principal investigator, William Collinge, PhD, president of Collinge and Associates, "The number of massages averaged about four per week across all patients, but the duration of massages was particularly important for stage IV patients. At four-week follow-up, 78% of those who averaged over 13.75 minutes per massage had reduced stress scores, while only 15% of those receiving briefer massages did, a significant difference. It appears that 14 minutes is some kind of a 'tipping point' where the effects of massages by [family members](#) accumulate and reduce stress in these patients over time."

The study also looked at the immediate effects of massages by care partners and found significant reductions in stress/anxiety (44% reduction), (34%), fatigue (32%), depression (31%), and nausea (29%).

These reductions are on a par with what might be expected from a professional massage therapist, Collinge said, and bode well for improved quality of life in cancer patients.

According to Collinge, "It appears that care partners receiving video instruction can achieve some of the same results as professional practitioners. This has important implications for patient [quality of life](#), but also for caregiver satisfaction. Caregivers are at risk of distress themselves - they can feel helpless and frustrated at not feeling able to help. This gives a way to help the patient feel better and increase their own effectiveness and satisfaction as a caregiver. It also appears to strengthen the relationship bond, which is important to both."

More information: The program is available to the public as "Touch, Caring and Cancer: Simple Instruction for Family and Friends" in English, Spanish and Chinese versions. Information and video trailers are available at www.PartnersInHealing.Net .

Provided by Collinge & Associates

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