

## SHIATSU AND MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Mike Flanagan, MRSS, is a Leeds-based Shiatsu practitioner. Since September 2000, Mike has been working in conjunction with Leeds Teaching Hospitals Trust to provide Shiatsu for NHS staff. Mike holds a clinic once a week at St Jame's University Hospital in Leeds. Treatments are available to all hospital staff at concessionary rates.

In his private practice, Mike has a particular interest in back pain and postural issues as well as neurological disorders (having worked with a number of multiple sclerosis sufferers). He enjoys helping clients identify ways in which they can take an active part in their own healing process.

This 'looking after the carers' approach is also taken in a palliative care project in Guildford. At The Beacon, a day care centre attached to the Royal Surrey County Hospital, Penny Elliott, MRSS, offers Shiatsu to carers of patients.

### LETTERS:

I have worked with a few clients with MS and found Shiatsu to be most beneficial.

Specifically, with a wheelchair bound client, I found that working on the legs helped reduce the severity of spasm, enabling the client to manage to go to the loo for herself, rather than getting her carer (husband) to take her underwear off etc.

*Trish Dent, Shiatsu Practitioner*

### ARTICLES / MEDIA COVERAGE

#### Massage (Victorian State Government, Better Health Channel)

There are various types of massage including Shiatsu, Swedish massage and acupressure. The skin is the largest organ of the body and is packed with nerve endings that respond to touch. Massage works by soothing the skin and relaxing tense muscles. Regular massages can help a person with MS to better manage muscle pain.

(E-mails on Remedy Find website, both 2005)

#### Zen Shiatsu

I've had many deep tissue massages by several different massage therapists and they've all been wonderful and effective. But in recent months I had an opportunity to try Zen Shiatsu, and I'm utterly hooked. It's the only type of massage I'm going to have from now on. Shiatsu is almost a perfect combination of three wonderful therapies - acupuncture (though it uses acupressure instead), the gentle stretching of yoga and the wonders of deep tissue massage. I felt reborn - much more supple as well as deeply relaxed - after my first session. And the feeling lasted for several days (the afterglow of regular massages never lasted that long!) Subsequent sessions have each been a bit different, depending on what "channels" they work on (bladder, kidney, liver and gallbladder channels so far), but each has been incredible with amazing results.

I do wish that therapeutic bodywork like Shiatsu were covered by insurance, but I still make it a personal priority once or twice a month. It's cheaper than a lot of things and a bargain at twice the price for the way it banishes tension, flushes out toxins, limbers the muscles and relaxes mind and body, and the only thing I have to do is lay there and try not to drool. (Drooling is the only side effect I've experienced, but hey - at least they're not MY pillow cases!) :-D

#### Helpful for some people....

I found an excellent practitioner, willing to take me on. But I think my MS is too far progressed for Shiatsu massage to be helpful. Each treatment, though she was gentle, caused more and more pain which lasted for

days, and impaired my ability to walk. Still, I would recommend this massage for persons younger than I (66) whose MS is less advanced.

### Massage & Multiple Sclerosis

A report of a small pilot study has indicated that massage therapy offers appreciable benefits for MS patients. Twelve patients (8 female and 4 male) all with diagnosed MS participated in the study in which participants were given a 25 minute back and leg oil massage given by qualified massage therapists. Each treatment began with effleurage (rhythmic stroking) which was followed by petrissage (kneading) and then ended with light effleurage.

Mood states including tension, depression, anger, fatigue and vigour were recorded pre- and post treatment using a modified Profile of Mood States (POMS) questionnaire. The participants were also asked to summarise their own subjective perception of the benefits of the massage treatment in a one-word answer. Immunological effects were monitored by taking a saliva sample pre- and post treatment which was immediately frozen to eliminate any reaction of the protein and later analysed.

The results showed that significant beneficial changes occurred in the patients mood states after massage therapy, and more interestingly, patients with negative mood states prior to treatment showed noticeable improvements in their immune functioning after the massage treatment.

The researchers noted that their results support their hypothesis that massage "would produce a more positive mood state with MS sufferers" and that it "would promote positive immune modulation in those clients".

Although a very small scale study which had no control group (indicating that any conclusions should be drawn with great caution), this piece of research does support earlier research findings that massage appears to offer psychological benefits by reducing the negative mood states of tension and fatigue, whilst maintaining a high level of vigour and a positive mood state. Further research will no doubt be forthcoming, but in the meantime, massage therapy may be considered a useful complementary therapy for MS patients.

Graydon J, McKee N. Massage as therapy in multiple sclerosis. JACM July 1997 27-28.

It is generally not advisable to practice shiatsu on people who have serious illnesses such as heart disorders, multiple sclerosis or cancer. An experienced practitioner may be able to help, but a detailed and accurate diagnosis and course of treatment is essential.

[http://holisticonline.com/Shiatsu/hol\\_shiatsu\\_rules.htm](http://holisticonline.com/Shiatsu/hol_shiatsu_rules.htm)

Shiatsu is extremely popular here. I introduced it to the Sussex MS Centre around 1998 when I was studying at the Brighton Shiatsu College. We now have 4 shiatsu practitioners working here and they're usually booked up 2 months in advance.

We have monitored the benefits of shiatsu, using an NHS approved method (MYMOP and SF36 – you could look them up on the net) and without exception this showed that shiatsu was useful for all the people who tried it.

Personally, I find that with most clients its best to start with plenty of movement in the treatment. Hip/shoulder rotations, lots of stretches – in simple terms MS people tend to be Yin, so the treatment needs to be Yang! They certainly like being moved around.

From a 5 element point of view, you will see all the usual combinations, but wood and water tend to be the most common. Wood from the rigidity, muscle spasm, lack of mobility, left right imbalance etc. Water as they're constantly fatigued, lack of drive, motivation etc.

People with MS have had to accept a radical change in their lives. They can no longer do what they used to (Metal – grief for loss!) they can become depressed, sometimes total despair. Work on their outlook on life is important. They don't get much from the medical profession (ask your people how their neurologist helps!), and to feel they are doing something can help generate a more positive frame of mind. Support groups have an essential role here.

A basic knowledge of the pathology of MS is useful. You can get this from lots of places – MS Society, MS Research Trust, MS Resource Centre etc. MS is degradation of the myelin sheath coating the nerves in the Central Nervous System resulting in scarring (Multiple = many, Sclerosis = scar, Multiple Sclerosis = many scars). The damage is caused by the immune system not recognizing the myelin. The symptom will depend on which nerve is damaged. Damage to a motor nerve will cause movement problems, damage to a sensory nerve will cause strange sensations or pain, damage to the optic nerve will cause sight problems etc. etc.

There are no particular contra indications for MS people. Obviously the treatment is geared towards the individual. Some experience pain and may not appreciate heavy pressure, so project into the points, use holding and be gentle with the stretches, but most want the pressure and benefit from it.

We run workshops here and have found the introduction of some physiotherapy techniques into the shiatsu treatment useful (helps with the anatomy studies as well). We have used a technique called Neuro-Muscular Energising Therapy (NET) developed by a physio from Yorkshire, Charlie King. Several of the MS centres have used him to train their physios, but I believe we are the only one to introduce it into shiatsu. Other workshops here have included Michael Rose (who studied with Masunaga) and Paul Lundberg (The Book of Shiatsu).

Alan Taylor, Centre Manager, Sussex Multiple Sclerosis Treatment Centre  
[www.mssussex.com](http://www.mssussex.com)

## **CASE STUDY**

### **Damaged Achilles tendon on MS Sufferer**

#### **Personal History**

Jo (pseudonym) is a Managing Director of a surveying company. He is 48 years old and is married with two boys, aged five and seven years. He enjoys his work and feels able to keep pace with the challenges and workload despite chronic illness.

Jo does find life generally stressful and tends to fret a lot and have a negative outlook, He is a non-smoker, but enjoys alcohol especially at weekends, his favourite tipple being malt whiskey. Jo has three dogs, a spaniel and two black flat coats from which he breeds. He enjoys walking and fishing and he swims at least once a week-usually with family members. Jo has always been an avid gardener however he was recently encouraged by his wife to employ someone to help in the garden (approx 1-acre) and to chop logs, since he finds these activities extremely tiring.

Following a diagnosis of multiple sclerosis (MS) two and a half years ago Jo has attended several complementary therapists including an aromatherapist, and a nutritional therapist for dietary advice and supplements. Jo admits that he would never have considered such therapies prior to his MS diagnosis, however he complies with recommendations and treatments and feels that each therapy has been beneficial.

Jo suffered from a tendon injury a month ago whilst playing tennis with the children on holiday. He is keen to try Shiatsu in the hope that this will reduce symptoms and accelerate recovery. He also hopes that Shiatsu will provide relaxation, something that he finds hard to find space for at work or home.

## Medical History

- Multiple Sclerosis-subcutaneous injections of Capaxon daily for life. Since diagnosis Jo is more easily fatigued and has a marked tremor to his legs.
- Wheat Intolerance-eating wheat results in bloating and diarrhoea, follows a wheat free diet.
- Haemorrhoids.
- Pneumonia-three and a half years ago, hospitalised.
- Hay fever-itchy eyes and nasal symptoms.
- Left Achilles Tendon Injury one month ago, associated lower leg oedema.

## Oriental Diagnosis

This case study follows the Zen theoretical framework, however 5 elements/Zen are used to characterise Jo and TCM assists the facilitation of dietary advice.

Jo has a high forehead (BL) with one line between his eye brows (LV), he has a grounded physique, is 5ft 8 in tall and is of a muscular build (Wood). He likes to wear green or navy (Wood & Water), and has a tendency to feel stressed with chaos, often associated with having two young boys (Wood). He tends to look on the negative side of everything and worries a lot (Earth/Wood). Jo is easily fatigued (Water). These characteristics together with his medical history (Water & Wood) indicate that Jo is prominently a Wood/Water character in five element terms.

In Zen theory MS is a disorder of the nervous system, and is associated with a BL imbalance. Jo's MS together with a demanding position as Managing Director and father of two young boys, compounded by his inability to find time/space for relaxation is resulting in BL energy depletion. Jo is mentally and physical fatigued!

In Zen Shiatsu the kyo meridian is usually the cause of imbalance whilst the jitsu reflects it's effect: Jo is constantly pushing himself, striving to lead the company forward. The last few years have been difficult due to his MS and he has had to work extremely hard to keep pace with the business, this has resulted in depleted BL energy/fatigue. The effect of his depleted BL energy and fatigue are symptoms that include tremor, spasm, short temper, frustration, indecisiveness and an inability to rest/relax or find inner peace, each corresponding with GB jitsu.

His position of control within the company requires power, confidence and assertiveness – GB qualities, thus reinforcing these energies and contributing to jitsu GB. It is vital that Jo takes control of his life and finds time to stop, he should aim to develop a better and happier work/family/self balance.

## *Treatment Table*

TxNo	Date	Kyo	Jitsu	Present Problem/Feedback
1	12/05/04	BL	SI	Damaged Achilles tendon left ankle, oedema below knee
2	19/05/04	SP	GB	Ankle improving, slight cough, MS symptoms worse for past month
3	24/05/04	TH	LV	Cough & Phelgm (clear/mucous), taking Echinacea, no motivation
4	02/06/04	BL	GB	Bloated, tired, short tempered, indecisive, anal fissure diagnosed
5	23/06/04	LU	GB	Oedema & cough resolving, not sleeping well
6	13/07/04	SP	GB	Well& relaxed, poor memory, home alone, sleeping better
7	28/07/04	BL	GB	Lower backache, hay-fever, MS symptoms-tremor to legs
8	13/09/04	KD	LV	Backache resolved, anal fissure healed, tendon almost healed, feeling tired.

### Treatment 1

Aim – Assist healing.

Treatment – Attention to left leg/ankle. Local and distal points i.e. GB34 (tendons and joints) and KD3 (oedema).

### Recommendations

- Rotation/flexion of ankle to encourage circulation and reduce oedema.
- Diet – Strengthen/soothe nerves – oats, rice, goat's milk.  
Reduce Live Wind symptoms – celery, ginger, oats, kuzu.

### Treatment 2

Aim – Healing, reduce anxiety.

Treatment – Leg points/meridians – GB34, BL & KD. LU1 & 2 for cough.

### Recommendations –

- Use KD3.

### Treatment 3

Aim – Smooth flow of energy.

Treatment – A small 'knot', approx. 2" diameter at posterior L. mid calf area. No discomfort or inflammation, gentle work carried out above and below this area.

### Recommendations –

- Foot and ankle 'Do-In' exercises.
- Warm baths and gentle massage to left calf.

### Treatment 4

Aim – Relaxation

Treatment - Sedate GB to aid decisiveness, reduce bloating – GB24.

### Recommendations –

- Time for self.

### Treatment 5

Aim – Aid sleep.

Treatment – Appeared on edge, relaxed during treatment.

### Recommendations –

- Lavender to aid sleep.

### Treatment 6

Aim – 'Whatever you think'.

Frustrated with personality limitations. Discussed five-element theory and character qualities together with benefits of regular Shiatsu.

Treatment – Neck stretches to relieve tension.

### Recommendations –

- Pungent foods i.e. coriander, marjoram and garlic to shift GB energy.

### Treatment 7

Aim – Ease Backache.

Treatment – Rocking, back stretch most effective at lumbar 1-2 area. Tension at R. lower back dispersed and sedated, tonification to area above and below.

### Recommendations –

- BL Makko-Ho.
- Back stretch exercises.

### Treatment 8

Aim - Relaxation

Treatment – Tonify KD, utilise GB34, GB 14 and LV 13 & 14.

### Recommendations –

- BL Makko – Ho.

### Conclusion

During the Case Study Jo attended for Shiatsu on a regular basis, initially once a week. He was able to dedicate time out for himself, something he was unable to do at home. His regular attendance benefited him both physically and emotionally. He demonstrated general health improvements, always giving positive feedback following treatments.

The initial reason for his attendance for Shiatsu was a torn Achilles tendon and associated oedema, the tendon has almost healed (prior to hospital appt) and the oedema resolved. Jo admitted to feeling the benefit of regular Shiatsu especially in relation to relaxation, something that he finds difficult to find space for at home. Following treatment he admitted to being much more relaxed for several days and was definitely more relaxed with the children and with life generally. As well as Shiatsu, Jo endeavours to take time out of work, when this is possible, and has recently enjoyed a days' loch fishing which he found both relaxing and fulfilling.

Jo's diagnostic picture demonstrates a cycle of BL Kyo and GB Jitsu, which has proven difficult to change. His chronic illness, its treatment and symptoms may be partially to blame for this ongoing depletion which combined with over-work, and limited time for relaxation results in tiredness, anxiety and frustration often demonstrated when he loses his temper with those he loves.

BL kyo – fatigue, resulting in GB jitsu-anxiety and frustration.

Over the last few months, Jo has made time for himself by coming along for Shiatsu. He has also followed recommendations both regarding diet and exercise, and admits to feeling the benefit. Making time for relaxation and taking life at a slower pace has reduced his stress levels and in doing has improved family life.

It is hoped that regular Shiatsu treatments aimed at tonifying BL/KD and sedating LV/GB as they appear at diagnosis and encouraging relaxation, will continue to assist Jo to balance family, work and health commitments. Shiatsu has definitely enabled Jo to take more control of his life by facilitating 'time out', and by encouraging him to take more care of himself resulting in reduced stress and associated work and family pressures. It is hoped that Shiatsu will continue to support Jo by reducing both physical and emotional symptoms and perhaps eventually result in a more balanced energetic pattern.

Dee Cameron