

3rd February 2009

Dear Shiatsu Practitioner,

As many of you may know, the European Shiatsu Federation and the University of Leeds completed a research study looking at how shiatsu is perceived by our clients and the effects we can expect to see following six months of shiatsu treatments.

To make the most of this research we need you to get out there and talk to as many people about these findings as you can. As shiatsu practitioners we are experienced in talking about our art and these findings from the ESF can add weight to our discussion especially among healthcare professionals.

General Practitioners (GPs) are among the target audience of healthcare professionals that would benefit from increased awareness of the effects of shiatsu. We would like to encourage you to approach your local GP or practice manager and talk to them about shiatsu and the results from this study.

To help you with this we have provided you with a fact sheet that contains lots of useful information that a GP is likely to want to know about the study and its results. Of course, GPs may ask additional questions about what shiatsu involves, but we are sure that you will have these questions covered. It is important to stress that all shiatsu practitioners receive a high level of training accredited by the Shiatsu Society and that they are appropriately insured.

At the end of this letter you will find a glossary of terms used in the GP fact sheet that may be unfamiliar to you.

Many thanks to Cheryl Jenkins, Seamus Connolly and the research sub committee.

Yours sincerely

Tamsin

Tamsin Grainger
Chair

Glossary

Baseline – prior to study entry data are collected to allow comparisons before and after treatment.

Longitudinal cohort study – describes a study that measures the effect of an intervention on a group of people at regular intervals of time. In this example, the study measured the effect of shiatsu on a group of people at regular intervals (baseline, following the first session, and following three and six months of treatment) over a period of six months.

Previously validated – the questionnaire was assessed during a previous study to ensure that it was robust and provided appropriate data that met the objectives of the study.

P value – this represents the probability that the result could have occurred by chance if the null hypothesis is true. In this case, the null hypothesis was that shiatsu would not affect clients' perception of health. Therefore, the P value 0.05 shows that there is a 95% probability that the effects of shiatsu reported in the ESF study could not have occurred by chance. The null hypothesis is rejected and the results are described as "significant".

Self-administered questionnaire – the questionnaire was completed by the individual taking part in the study.

Shiatsu Shown to Improve Health – Key Facts for GPs

Background

- Recent research findings carried out by the University of Leeds on behalf of the European Shiatsu Federation suggest a role for shiatsu in maintaining and enhancing health, and in treating a range of symptoms.
- The study objectives were to assess client perceptions of the short- and longer-term effects of shiatsu across Austria, Spain and the UK over a six-month period.

Methods

- A total of 948 clients received shiatsu in routine practice from one of 85 practitioners participating in the study.
- Data were collected from this longitudinal cohort study using previously validated self-administered questionnaires which included a scoring system for each outcome measure [Long A.F. et al. *J Altern Complement Med* 2003; 9(4):539-47].
- Outcome measures included: symptom severity; changes in healthcare use at baseline, 3 and 6 months; shiatsu specific effects; uptake of lifestyle advice given by shiatsu practitioners; degree to which clients' expectations were met; and adverse events.

Results

- 67% of clients [633/948] receiving shiatsu provided full follow-up data.
- Symptoms most frequently stated as reasons for wanting shiatsu included problems with “muscles, joints, structures”; “tension/stress”, and “low energy/fatigue” or to “maintain health”.
- Symptoms scores improved significantly and were maintained over the six month study ($P \leq 0.05$) for all symptom groups in Austria and the UK, and two symptom groups in Spain (“muscles, joints, structures” and “tension/stress”).
- At the study end, 86% of clients perceived that shiatsu was effective in treating symptoms of stress and tension, problems with muscles and joints including back pain and posture, low energy and fatigue; 77-80% of clients indicated that they had changed their lifestyle as a result of receiving shiatsu; 95% of clients experienced an increased sense of calm and feeling of relaxation.
- Only 1.4% [9/10] of clients reported potential adverse events; none ceased shiatsu therapy.
- The study found receivers had a reduced dependence on medication.

Conclusions

- There is a potential role for shiatsu in public health as this therapy is associated with an improvement in symptom severity, health awareness and health maintenance. Overall, clients receiving shiatsu adopted a more relaxed, healthier, and balanced approach to life.

Further details

- Long AF. *J Altern Complement Med* 2008; 14(8):921-30
- Full report available at European Shiatsu Federation website: <http://www.shiatsu-esf.org/english/index.html>. Or contact Seamus Connolly at seamus_connolly@eircom.net