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msconnection

Providing Help for Today, and Hope for Tomorrow... This is Why We're Here!

The Medium is Massage

Massage therapy has been practiced for thousands of years, from ancient Greece and Egypt to India and China.

In the U.S. today, more than 150 kinds of massage therapy are used while most are variations of Swedish massage, which was invented in the 19th century.

What Massage Can Do for You

Most of what we know about massage is anecdotal. In one small scientific study of 24 people with MS, massage appeared to improve self-esteem and body image.

Patricia Kennedy, RN, CNP, MSCN, a nurse practitioner at the Rocky Mountain MS Center in Colorado, told *MSConnection* that many of the people she sees report positive benefits.

"My patients use massage to relieve spasticity and pain," Kennedy said. "Massage can also provide a chance to relax, helping to relieve anxiety and fear. The simple act of touch conveys comfort, caring, and acceptance."

A Few Cautions

Massage therapy is generally safe. However, consult a physician if you have:

- **Pain.** Get a recommendation for the best type of massage therapy for you.
- **Pressure sores.** While massage may be helpful in preventing pressure sores, it should be avoided if pressure sores or reddened areas of inflammation are present on the skin.
- **Edema.** Swelling caused by a buildup of fluid can have many causes.
- **Osteoporosis.** People with MS tend to have lower bone mass and have a greater risk for fractures. When osteoporosis is present, massage therapy should be given only with the advice of a physician.

Be Ready for B.Fit!

Every Thursday morning, 48-year-old Gayle Jones of Boston takes The Ride to The Boston Home (TBH) in Dorchester, a long-term-care facility for adults living with multiple sclerosis and other progressive neurological diseases. Gayle looks forward to an invigorating day of rehabilitation and social interaction provided through TBH's new B.Fit! outpatient program. At TBH, she joins others in the community who have MS and whose needs for therapy and socialization have not been met. Until now.

"B.Fit! fills a void by providing much-needed services to adults with disabilities who are living at home. This program is an innovative response to what we have identified as an inadequate level of community-based services

for this population," says Linda Guiod, RN, VP of Chapter Programs at the Central New England Chapter. The National Multiple Sclerosis Society is offering B.Fit! in partnership with The Boston Home.

According to Marva Serotkin, President and CEO of TBH, "The waiting list for The Boston Home continues to grow, and it is now at 140. It is important that these and many other underserved adults with MS have an opportunity to benefit from specialized services designed to help them to become more independent and empowered. We are grateful to our colleagues from the local NMSS chapter for collaborating with us to make B.Fit! a reality."

Serotkin also recognized the Cabot Family Charitable Trust for providing a grant for start-up funding for the program.



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Marathon Strides Against MS



Linda Guiod, Vice President of Chapter Programs with B.Fit! participant Barbara Keating in the "Cyber Cafe" at The Boston Home.

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Write it Off

Few insurance plans cover massage, and never long-term. You may be able to write it off on your taxes as a medical expense Kennedy said that many people get prescriptions from their doctors, which they save with their tax records. Consult with a qualified tax specialist.

People who Knead People

Ready for a massage, but not sure how to find a masseuse? The American Massage Therapy Association can supply names of approved therapists. Most states also have licensing programs. Call us for massage therapists on our referral lists.

■ American Massage Therapy Association

820 Davis Street, Suite 900
Evanston, IL 60201
www.amtamassage.org
Phone: 877-905-2700

■ Touch Research Institutes Department of Pediatrics University of Miami School of Medicine

P.O. Box 016820
Miami, FL 33101
www.miami.edu/touch-research
Phone: 305-243-6781



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information too!

Child: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: (____) _____

Age: _____ Grade: _____

Relative who has MS:

Guardian's Signature:

Mail to:

Judy Cotton
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
101A First Avenue, Suite 6
Waltham, MA 02451-1115

Be Ready for B.Fit!

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Nurturing the Spirit, Stimulating the Mind, Addressing Concerns

Gayle and the other participants in B.Fit! have access to a variety of structured and customized offerings based on their individual needs. B.Fit! includes rehabilitation for physical, occupational, and speech therapy, assistive technology, and exercise. The program involves many ongoing activities provided daily for the 96 residents at TBH, with support from the Home's dedicated staff of nursing professionals, physicians, and specialists in rehabilitation, social services, wellness, spirituality, technology, and nutrition. In addition, a key feature of the program is social interaction.

Gayle enjoys her exercise classes and the physical and mental stimulation she receives. Most of all, she values socializing with her peers and new friends.

"Before I heard about B.Fit!, I tried to network with other people in the community who had MS," says Gayle. "Now, it's much easier for me to go to The Boston Home and meet with other people in similar circumstances. The social connections at the Home are very special to me. My friends used to call me 'Miss Independent,' but it's hard to do it on your own. With the help of this program, I'm becoming 'Miss More Independent.'"

David Young-Hong, O.T., who coordinates the B.Fit! program, admires Gayle's enthusiasm. "In my experience, the social aspects of our program are just as significant as the therapies," he says. "Actually, therapeutic services work on many levels, and we provide the kind of social, emotional, and intellectual support that engages the participants. At the end of the day, they leave feeling more vital and energized. Without this kind of an outlet, many people with MS can become isolated, and isolation can lead to depression."

Social activities at TBH include current events, creative writing, bridge games, entertainment, and cultural outings. B.Fit! also connects participants to the outside world through what TBH residents call their "cyber café." Here, TBH staff assist residents and outpatients with e-mail and other computer programs.

"The Boston Home is a pioneer in assistive technology," says Guidod. "By using the tools of advanced technology, people with MS can become more self-reliant." Devices such as voice activation, environmental controls, and digital photography with adaptive cameras are all available to program participants.

Another key program feature is care management, which helps participants navigate the health and human services network. As needed, the program manager will communicate with the participants' physicians or with the Chapter to access its 'Home LINKS' program.

Building Bridges

"You might say we're trying to build a community without walls," says Serotkin. "By offering these outpatient services, we are helping members of the community as well as our residents. Both groups have similar challenges, and they have much to share. As far as we know, The Boston Home is the country's first long-term-care facility to integrate outpatients and residents in a social and rehabilitation program that serves moderately to severely disabled adults in the continuum of care."

"This is a truly unique program," adds Young-Hong. "It is very rewarding to see our residents and the outpatients getting to know each other and supporting each other."

The smile on Gayle's face speaks volumes: "I feel very comfortable at The Boston Home," she says. "It all comes together here."

Seeking Additional Support

B.Fit!, which now runs from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. every Thursday, offers a sliding-fee scale to individuals based on financial need. Anyone with a progressive neurological disorder can apply.

Serotkin says that negotiations are underway to establish contracts with insurance carriers and MassHealth. TBH and the Chapter are looking for additional funding to ensure the program's success.

TBH and the Chapter seek to expand B.Fit! and continue advocacy efforts for this underserved population in order to offer it five days a week and serve at least 30 outpatients in the first year."