

FACTFILE: GCE HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE

HOLISTIC THERAPIES



Use of holistic therapies in health and social care settings

Students should be able to:

- demonstrate knowledge and understanding of how holistic therapies are used in settings such as:
 - residential or nursing homes
 - hospices and hospitals
 - day centres and
 - GP surgeries
- assess the benefits of holistic therapies for service users in the chosen setting.



Course Content

An increasing number of care settings are using holistic therapies alongside, or in addition to, conventional/orthodox treatments.

Residential or nursing homes

Many residential and nursing homes now offer holistic therapies to their residents.

As many of the residents may have complex needs or limited mobility massage is a suitable therapy. This treatment may involve hand, arm, neck, shoulder, back and Indian head massage.

The massage can be given while the resident is seated or lying in bed. Oils and lotions used are well diluted and suitable for fragile and sensitive skin.

Suitable oils include grapefruit, lavender, camomile and rosewood. Massage has a comforting effect on residents. It also improves skin condition, provides relaxation and boosts the emotional well-being of residents. Massage can also help reduce stress, agitation, anxiety and improve sleeping patterns.



Activity 1

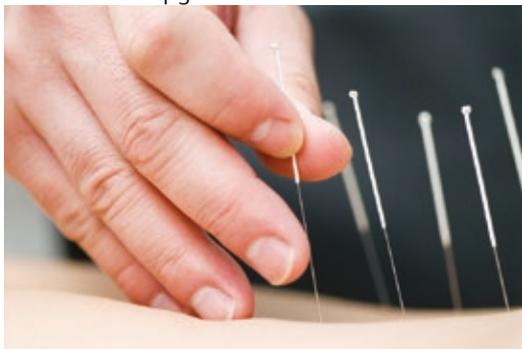
Contact residential or nursing homes in your local area to find what holistic therapies are available.

Hospices and hospitals

Hospices provide care for people who have a terminal illness and they aim to feel more like a home than a hospital.

A range of medical and nursing care is provided and most hospices offer a range of holistic therapies. These therapies are given alongside orthodox/conventional medical treatment. A range of holistic therapies may be offered including:

- Acupressure which involves the stimulation of specific points on the body.
- Acupuncture which involves the stimulation of special points on the body with fine needles. Acupuncture can aid pain relief and is effective in reducing tiredness, nausea, depression and shortness of breath.
- Aromatherapy involves the use of essential oils



extracted from herbs, plants, flowers, trees and bushes. The oils give off fragrant aromas which are soothing, relaxing and can reduce anxiety.

- Art therapy helps individuals to express their feelings and to become less anxious, relax and feel physically better.
- Hypnotherapy creates a state of heightened awareness and helps individuals to open their minds to beneficial suggestions which may make positive changes in their lives. It may help individuals cope with a terminal illness and improve relaxation.
- Massage involves the kneading and stroking of the soft tissues of the body. It may help individuals to relax, relieve tension and to sleep better.

- Indian head massage involves the massage of the soft tissue of the neck, scalp, arms and shoulders. This can relieve stress and tension.
- Reflexology involves massage of the feet and lower legs. It may also involve massage of the hands. Individuals say it can improve their sense of well-being and is relaxing.



- Reiki involves therapists placing their hands either on or just above certain points of the body. The therapy may relieve pain, reduce anxiety, encourage sleep and improve well-being.
- Relaxation involves techniques like breathing exercises, relaxing groups of muscles and meditation. Relaxation aims to promote a sense of peace and balance.
- Shiatsu is a type of massage when the therapist uses fingers, thumbs and elbows to apply gentle pressure to key points on the body. It may improve energy levels and aid relaxation.
- Touch therapy involves gently holding an individual using specific techniques.

Activity 2

Use the internet or contact a hospice to investigate the holistic therapies available.

A small number of hospitals now offer holistic therapies to patients especially where orthodox medicine does not seem to have offered a complete solution. The range of therapies available varies from hospital to hospital and may include:

- acupuncture
- aromatherapy
- art therapy

- chiropractic which involves chiropractors using their hands to treat disorders of the bones, joints and muscles.
- homeopathy is based on the principle that a substance which causes certain symptoms can also help remove those symptoms. The therapy involves taking highly diluted substances given as a tincture, capsule or pill.
- massage
- osteopathy involves massaging, moving and stretching an individual's muscles and joints to treat or prevent problems.
- clinical hypnotherapy
- Chi Kung originates from the ancient Chinese health system and involves specific movements to encourage the movement of Chi around the body.
- herbal medicine is made up of trees plants or fungi and is usually taken as drops
- visualisation involves a therapist helping an individual to create images in their mind of a place or activity that has made them happy in the past.

These therapies are used in the management of a wide range of medical conditions ranging from back pain to cancer to arthritis to Alzheimer's disease and are often used alongside orthodox treatments. A significant number of hospitals offer holistic therapies to cancer patients to help relieve the unpleasant side effects of treatments.

The therapies can be used for pain relief and sleeping difficulties. A number of patients have reported that holistic therapies have helped relieve the anxiety and tension they experienced with their illness. Another benefit is that the therapies can relieve stress and create a sense of well-being. Many patients enjoy the one-to-one contact with the therapist in relaxed and pleasant surroundings and as a result often talk to the therapist about their worries and concerns. This is a valuable source of emotional support for patients.

A number of maternity units are now offering holistic therapies during pregnancy and birth. These therapies offer a range of benefits. They can relieve some of the discomforts of pregnancy and ease nausea and vomiting. The therapies help the body prepare for labour increasing the chances of a natural birth.



Commonly used holistic therapies include:

- massage which aids relaxation and improves the chances of a natural birth as it encourages the natural onset of labour.
- aromatherapy uses oils blended to meet specific needs and is calming and relaxing.
- acupuncture aids the relief of common pregnancy ailments and also promotes relaxation. Some mothers-to-be use reflexology to prepare for labour and have a natural birth. The treatments are given weekly from 37 weeks.
- hypnosis for childbirth (hypno-birthing) is a form of deep relaxation. Research has indicated that that it eases pain and discomfort during the first stage of labour thus reducing the need for pain relieving drugs.
- osteopathy and chiropractic are effective in easing back pain during pregnancy

Day centres

Day centres provide valuable opportunities for a range of people.

Older people and people with learning or physical disabilities/illnesses or mental health problems get the opportunity to meet up, have a chat with friends, enjoy a meal and take part in activities. Some centres are run by voluntary organisations and others by the Trusts. Whilst lack of funding limits the range of services they can offer, some centres may provide holistic therapies.

Day centres for people with dementia may offer aromatherapy, massage or bright light therapy (this involves sitting in front of a light box for 30 minutes) and music therapy. Music therapy encourages service users to use their own voice and a range of musical instruments. This can enhance the service users' quality of life, increase their self-awareness and promote emotional well-being.



Service users with mental health problems may be able to access acupuncture, aromatherapy, yoga, massage and music therapy at a day centre. These therapies aid relaxation and may be useful in treating symptoms of anxiety and depression. Massage, music therapy and aromatherapy are available in some day centres for service users with learning disabilities. Day centres organised by Marie Curie offer a wide range of holistic therapies to service users and their families. These include reflexology, aromatherapy, massage, touch therapy and acupuncture.

Activity 3

Compile a list of day centres in your local area and the holistic therapies available in each.

GP surgeries/practices

Some GPs recognise the benefit of holistic therapies and as a result are offering their patients access to a range of therapies. Research has indicated that GPs have found holistic therapies cost effective for the NHS and that not only is there a high success rate but patients are happier with the treatment. GPs may offer holistic therapies when orthodox treatments have had limited success or when a patient is seeking an alternative to drugs which may have serious or unpleasant side effects.

Some of the holistic therapies offered by GPs include:

- osteopathy which is recommended by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) for back pain. It can also be used to manage digestive problems.
- chiropractic can be used to treat pain and injury and focuses mainly on the back and joints.
- acupuncture is useful in treating various conditions including pain, nausea and migraines.
- hypnotherapy can be used to help patients overcome anxiety, phobias, stress, sleeping problems, pain and panic attacks.

In Northern Ireland a pilot project provided patients with access to a range of holistic therapies through their GP practices. The patients who had musculoskeletal and mental health conditions were from Shantallow Health Centre in Londonderry and The Arches Centre in Belfast. The range of therapies offered included acupuncture, massage, aromatherapy, chiropractic, osteopathy, reflexology and homeopathy. An evaluation of the project found that there was a significant level of health gain for the majority of patients.

A lack of GPs in Northern Ireland and a reduction in the health care budget may limit the availability of holistic therapies in GP surgeries/practices.

Activity 4

Research health centres in your local area to find out if holistic therapies are offered to service users.

