Massage for Neurological Conditions
By Beth Cary, LMT, for Massage Professionals, Inc.

I often find the workings of the human body awe inspiring and the meeting ground between the muscular system and the nervous system is no exception. When working properly it is like a teacher instructing a child what to do. He listens intently and accomplishes the task. Unfortunately for those with neurological disorders it is more like a parent talking with a teenager. He doesn’t even acknowledge that you are in the same room. Clear communication between the muscular system and the nervous system helps us to react to danger, jump for joy or simply breathe in and out.

There are hundreds of thousands of neurological disorders and no matter what the etiology of the disease many involve the breakdown of communication between the central nervous system and the skeletal muscles. Common symptoms are muscle tension, spasm or rigidity and on the flip side loss of muscle control, flaccidity and atrophy. Massage can help people with Parkinson’s disease, Multiple Sclerosis and those who have had a stroke.

Parkinson’s Disease:
In the case of Parkinson’s relentless muscle contractions lead to muscle exhaustion. It is much like the muscle exhaustion experienced by an athlete. For athletes, however, periods of prolonged muscular demand are followed by periods of rest. Parkinson’s individuals do not get this rest period. For them the amount of oxygen available to the muscles is insufficient for the chronic work load. Massage improves the flow of oxygen to muscles, promotes muscle relaxation and increases range of motion.

Multiple Sclerosis (MS):
Individuals with MS frequently get massage to relieve symptoms such as spasticity, pain, poor circulation and pressure sores. While massage does not change the course of the disease a 1998 study found that massage does: 1) relieve anxiety/depression, 2) improve mood/self-esteem/body image and 3) increase mobility and social functioning for MS patients.

Cerebrovascular Accident (CVA) or Stroke:
Stroke frequently results in either flaccid paralysis (FP) or spastic paralysis (SP). An arm affected with flaccid paralysis lacks shoulder muscle support and, therefore, causes shoulder strain. Conversely spastic paralysis leads to the crippling contractions seen in those with long-standing histories of stroke. The flexors contract and over time tendons shorten as well. Massage relieves shoulder strain associated with flaccid paralysis and relaxes and lengthens the flexors affected with spastic paralysis.

A commonality of neurological disorders is their attack on the musculature of the body. A consistent massage program is a good counter attack! Call your spa today (239) 405-0463 to set up a regular massage schedule.

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