

Anterior and Lateral Chest Massage

Preamble

The issues surrounding the applications of anterior and lateral chest massage are numerous. They include legal, medical, therapist training and protection of the consumer. Massage & Myotherapy Australia receives ethical complaints in relation to anterior and lateral chest massage which, at times, are difficult to resolve based on inadequate information, inconsistent practice, and poor therapist/client communication.

Aim

This position statement is to serve as a context for therapists who perform anterior and lateral chest massage and to provide a platform from where the National Ethics Committee (NEC) can make an informed determination in relation to any complaints that arise. This position statement should be read in conjunction with the Massage & Myotherapy Australia Code of Ethics and Standards of Practiceⁱ and Anterior and Lateral Chest Massage Guidelinesⁱⁱ.

The Company Board of Directors serves to protect both the membership and the public by adopting this position statement which is resolutely linked to the overall position statement of informed consentⁱⁱⁱ.

Process

Massage of the anterior and lateral chest is often included as part of the massage sequence taught by a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) within the Health Training Package (HLT) in the Certificate IV and the Diploma Remedial Massage qualifications, the Advanced Diploma Myotherapy and the Bachelor degrees. It is also included in specific modalities at more depth so as to address specific musculoskeletal and lymphatic disorders as well as in traditional Eastern sequences.

It is the position of Massage & Myotherapy Australia that Massage Therapists must have additional specialised training in lymphoedema management before performing anterior and lateral chest manual lymphatic drainage (MLD) on clients who present with lymphoedema of the trunk, breast or upper limbs.

Massage therapists have the professional responsibility of making the decision as to the appropriateness of anterior and lateral chest massage on both male and female clients. However, decision making and treatment protocols should be consistent in context with the pathology and within the scope of practice of the practitioner.

Professional massage therapists should never, under any circumstance, proceed with treatment to any area of the body without first obtaining written "informed consent" having provided the client with information about why and how the treatment will be performed^{iv}. Therapists whose treatment plan is to work on anterior and lateral chest tissue must request specific consent before beginning the anterior and lateral chest massage.

Massage Therapists must recognise, accept and respect the right of every individual client to accept or decline anterior and lateral chest massage. The therapist must carefully ensure that the client is never, in any way, subjected to any form of pressure (direct or implied) to accept the proposed treatment.

Even when there is client consent for anterior and lateral chest massage to be included in a treatment, it is entirely inappropriate to provide disproportionately prolonged massage or pressure as to induce excessive pain or discomfort. The client is free to revoke consent at any stage during the massage. Under no circumstance are the areola or nipples to be touched or stimulated, regardless of technique or modality.

Appropriate draping^v is to be utilised during anterior and lateral chest massage treatment. Massage & Myotherapy Australia recommends that to avoid discrimination it is suggested that a client's anterior and lateral chest be covered when not being treated with a towel, sheet or sarong or, in the case of females, a bra or singlet. Sports bras or crop tops are discouraged unless they are the only form of appropriate apparel or at the client's request, dependent on treatment, sports, fascial lines etc.

Soft tissue techniques that may be applied to anterior and lateral chest tissue includes but is not limited to, MLD, Kahuna Bodywork or Lomi Lomi, myofascial release techniques (MFR), muscle energy techniques (MET), positional release techniques (PRT) and trigger point therapy (TrPT), and when specifically prescribed by a medical practitioner. Massage & Myotherapy Australia supports these procedures where indicated and where provided by professionally qualified massage therapists.

Prior to any treatment, massage therapists should clearly explain what the session will entail. If the treatment requested or required is outside the therapist's scope of practice, they must refer the client to the appropriate health practitioner. Examples of practitioners to refer to include, but not limited to, MLD by a qualified manual lymphatic drainage practitioner, or specific modalities such as Kahuna Bodywork, Lomi Lomi, neuromuscular therapists (NMT) or remedial massage therapists (RMT) who have completed ongoing studies in conditions affecting the anterior and lateral trunk, or complete decongestive therapy (CDT) specialised Physiotherapists.

Massage therapists are to consider the following carefully and prior to providing an anterior and lateral chest massage treatment:

- Proportionality: The benefit must outweigh the burden of treatment
- Nonmaleficence: The therapist must do no harm and must prevent harm from occurring
- Beneficence: The treatment must contribute to the client's wellbeing

Massage & Myotherapy Australia's Position Statement advises that treatment of the anterior and lateral chest region may include soft tissue treatment of the pectoralis minor, pectoralis major, serratus anterior, subscapularis, scalenes, sternocleidomastoid, sternalis, subclavius, anterior deltoid, intercostal muscles, latissimus dorsi and the superficial fascia of the sternum.

Massage does not include massage of the areola or nipples

For further indications and contraindications refer to Massage & Myotherapy Australia's Anterior and Lateral Chest Massage Guidelines on treatment.

ⁱ Massage & Myotherapy Australia Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice
ⁱⁱ Massage & Myotherapy Australia Practice Guidelines for Anterior and Lateral Chest Massage
ⁱⁱⁱ Massage & Myotherapy Australia Anterior and Lateral Chest Massage Consent Form
^{iv} Massage & Myotherapy Australia Position Statement - Informed Consent
^v Massage & Myotherapy Draping and Positioning Guidelines