

May 12th was National Fibromyalgia Day

Becky Leetch, LMT #6337

National Fibromyalgia Day was May 12, 2011. As a massage therapist with fibromyalgia, it's important to me that clients and LMTs become aware of this sometimes invisible, but real, condition. I have received pain relief and release through massage. In fact, that's what led me to become a massage therapist.

I try to do something around this time of year to learn more about Fibromyalgia (FM) and educate others about FM. On May 5th, I attended a Fibromyalgia, Chronic Fatigue, Chronic Pain support group in Gresham. Many of us were new members and it was exciting to share stories and remedies with each other. When I asked the group, one fact was clear: massage offered relief for most of us, **and suggested treatments were Bowen, Craniosacral, and Reiki. Some preferred deeper work.** It was different for each individual. I was fortunate to find this group through the National Fibromyalgia & Chronic Pain Association website www.fmcpaware.org. I also encourage you to learn more about FM from this website. There are also massage classes offered for FM treatment throughout Oregon.

Here are some facts:

Fibromyalgia (pronounced fy-bro-my-AL-ja) is one of the most common chronic pain conditions. The disorder affects an estimated 10 million people in the U.S. and an estimated 3-6% of the world population. While it is most prevalent in women —75-90 percent of the people who have FM are women—it also occurs in men and children of all ethnic groups. The disorder is often seen in families, among siblings or mothers and their children. The diagnosis is usually made between the ages of 20 to 50 years, but the incidence rises with age so that by age 80, approximately 8% of adults meet the American College of Rheumatology classification of fibromyalgia. For those with severe symptoms, fibromyalgia (FM) can be extremely debilitating and interfere with basic daily activities.

Diagnosis:

- The FM diagnostic criteria, established by the American College of Rheumatology (ACR) in 1990, includes a history of widespread pain in all four quadrants of the body for a minimum duration of three months, and pain in at least 11 of the 18 designated tender points when a specified amount of pressure is applied.
- Since people with FM tend to look healthy and conventional tests are typically normal, a physician knowledgeable about the disorder is necessary to make a diagnosis.
- Physicians should rule out other causes of the symptoms before making a diagnosis of fibromyalgia.

Symptoms:

- Although chronic, widespread body pain is the primary symptom of fibromyalgia, a variety of other symptoms are common in FM patients. Symptoms include: moderate to severe fatigue, sleep disorders, problems with cognitive functioning, IBS, headaches and migraines, anxiety and depression, and environmental sensitivities.
- Research has documented neuroendocrine physiological abnormalities that may contribute to the symptoms.

Causes:

- Recent research has suggested a genetic component. The disorder is often seen in families, among siblings or mothers and their children.

- Fibromyalgia often occurs following a physical trauma, such as an acute illness or injury, which may act as a “trigger” in the development of the disorder.
- Increasing attention is being devoted to the central nervous system as the underlying mechanism of FM. Recent studies have suggested that FM patients have generalized disturbance in pain processing and an amplified response to stimuli that would not ordinarily be painful in healthy individuals.

Treatment:

- Since there is no known cure for FM, treatment focuses on relieving symptoms and improving function.
- A variety of prescription medications are often used to reduce pain levels and improve sleep. On June 21, 2007, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved Lyrica (pregabalin) as the first drug to treat fibromyalgia. Cymbalta (duloxetine HCl) was approved in June 2008; and Savella (milnacipran HCl) was approved in January 2009.
- Alternative therapies, such as massage, myofascial release, acupuncture, chiropractic, herbal supplements and yoga, can be effective tools in managing FM symptoms.
- Increasing rest, pacing activities, reducing stress, practicing relaxation and improving nutrition can help minimize symptoms and improve quality of life.