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Title

Use of physical therapies by people with multiple sclerosis

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Rationale

Many of the musculoskeletal symptoms associated with multiple sclerosis can be managed with physical therapy even if the underlying disease process is unaffected. This study aims to determine the level of awareness and use of physical therapies by people with MS in the UK.

Study design

A retrospective cross sectional postal survey design, utilising a structured, self-administered questionnaire and availability sampling amongst members of 8 National MS Therapy centres, and an on-line MS message board.

Subjects

Existing members of either a National MS Therapy centre or the MS Resource Centre on-line message board. Volunteers were recruited based on willingness to participate. Inclusion criteria: 18 years of age or older, diagnosed with MS, and agreement that completion of the questionnaire confirmed consent to use the data.

Methods

National MS Therapy centres were identified via the MS Society website, and a request for volunteers was emailed to the centre managers.

Results

A total of 231 completed questionnaires were received: 67% from females and 33% from males. 91% had used CAM modalities of some kind, with physiotherapy being

the most popular (52%), followed by massage (44%), and chiropractic (42%). The 30 National MS Therapy websites all offered physiotherapy and massage, but none offered chiropractic. Of those who did not use chiropractic, 76% cited lack of knowledge as the main reason.

Conclusion

Physical therapies are by just over half those surveyed to help manage musculoskeletal symptoms associated with MS, but there is lack of awareness about chiropractic.