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### **Massage therapy reduces physical discomfort and improves mood disturbances in women with breast cancer**

**Background.** A randomized controlled trial was conducted to investigate the efficacy of classical massage treatment in reducing breast cancer-related symptoms and in improving mood disturbances. **Methods.** Women diagnosed with primary breast cancer were randomized into an intervention group and a control group. For a period of 5 weeks, the intervention group received bi-weekly 30-min classical massages in the back and head-neck areas. The control group received no additional treatment to their routine healthcare. To evaluate treatment efficacy, the following validated questionnaires were administered at baseline (T1), at the end of the intervention (T2), and at a followup at 11 weeks (T3): the Short Form-8 Health Survey<sup>®</sup>, the European Organization of Research and Treatment of Cancer quality of life questionnaire breast module (EORTC QLQ-BR23), the Giessen Complaints Inventory (GBI), and the Berlin Mood Questionnaire (BSF). **Results.** Eighty-six eligible women (mean age: 59 years) were enrolled in the study. A significantly higher reduction of physical discomfort was found in the intervention group compared with the control group at T2 ( $p=0.001$ ) and at T3 ( $p=0.038$ ). A decrease in fatigue was also observed. Women in the intervention group reported significantly lower mood disturbances at T2 ( $p<0.01$ ) but not at T3. The effect of treatment on mood disturbances was significantly higher if a patient was treated continuously by the same masseur. **Conclusion.** Classical massage seems to be an effective adjuvant treatment for reducing physical discomfort and fatigue, and improving mood disturbances in women with early stage breast cancer. Copyright (c) 2009 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.