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1: [J Soc Integr Oncol](#). 2007 Fall;5(4):147-54. [Links](#)

**Couples and cancer: feasibility of brief instruction in massage and touch therapy to build caregiver efficacy.**

[Collinge W](#), [Kahn J](#), [Yarnold P](#), [Bauer-Wu S](#), [McCorkle R](#).

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This study examined the feasibility of brief instruction in massage and touch therapy for caregivers ("partners") to provide comfort to cancer patients. Fifty partners and 49 patients participated. A longitudinal, within-subjects, repeated measures, control and intervention phases design used self-report instruments to assess feasibility via change in frequency, duration, partner-perceived self-efficacy, and patient-perceived helpfulness over a 90-day follow-up. Exploratory data were collected on psychosocial and quality of life variables. Focus groups provided qualitative data. A structured 6-hour workshop taught basic manual techniques for comfort and relaxation, followed by home practice. Significant increases in frequency (1.2 vs 2.7 times per week) and duration (4.7 vs 12.2 minutes) of massage, both  $p < .001$ , were sustained through the 3-month follow-up. Partners' perceived self-efficacy in massage and patients' ratings of its helpfulness more than doubled. Classification tree analysis found caregiver burden, relationship quality, and frequency and duration of practice to predict individual responses. Inhibitions about touch in cancer caregiving may lead to unnecessary physical and emotional distancing at a time when patients need touch the most. Brief instruction may be a feasible intervention to increase caregiver efficacy, patient satisfaction, quality of life, and quality of the relationship.

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