

## We Could All Use More Help: Resources to Consider

By Cassandra Van Dyck



You and your loved one are in the throes of a caregiving journey together. You have a health care team that are supporting your care partner's well-being, and you're working with some other professionals as well to care for your spouse or parent. Perhaps you've wondered, though, if there's anything or anyone else that can help with the problems that keep arising. Below is a list of some additional treatments that you may not be as familiar with that could support both you and your loved one to reduce pain, increase resilience, provide relaxation and give you helpful tools to increase well-being.

### Physiotherapy

Physiotherapists use exercise, manual therapy and advice to help people affected by illness, injury, or disability. They look at a patient's lifestyle and limitations, and work with them to improve mobility, lessen pain, and increase strength.

If your loved one is recovering from surgery, struggling to move around, or if they've recently been injured, it might be helpful to visit a physiotherapist for a consultation.

Some physiotherapy is covered under basic MSP. Speak with your doctor for more information. You do not need a referral to access physiotherapy, but asking your doctor may help you access low or no-cost services if finances are of concern.

*"Physio is a collaboration between the therapist and the client. Working together we experience greater success. I see myself educating & inspiring my clients to take positive steps toward optimal health."* – Michelle Nadon

### Acupuncture

Acupuncture is used to treat pain and a host of other problems, such as anxiety, depression, and digestive issues. They use fine, small needles and insert them in to various acupressure points, depending on which issue patients need support with. Acupuncturists are health care professionals who have studied Traditional Chinese Medicine and hold a Registered Acupuncturist designation. Sessions range in time, and a thorough consultation and intake to find out the patient's needs are always discussed prior to treatment.

If your care partner is comfortable with needles and open to trying a treatment that's perhaps a little outside of their comfort zone, acupuncture may be a great therapy to try. It does not interfere with other medical treatments.

Acupuncture is not covered by basic MSP, however there are clinics that offer sliding scale treatments, and prices can range depending on what the client needs. You do not need a referral to access acupuncture services.

*"I came to my acupuncturist with chronic fatigue syndrome, sensitivity to cold, and painful, light-sensitive eyes. I had had these conditions for six years. I'd been through conventional medicine and physical therapy. There was relief as soon as treatment was started. Energy has remained good. Am "Living A Life" with interest, which was not the case when I began treatment. My sensitivity to cold is remarkably improved. Pain is decreased by 75%. The condition of my eyes has also improved (to the point) that I am now able to watch television and have the curtains open, as well as go out without dark glasses. I am more than pleased with my response to acupuncture and Chinese herbs. A superior healing art in my opinion. I'm so grateful to have my life again." - Alice*

## **Dietician/Nutritionist**

Dieticians and Nutritionists support their patients to ensure they're meeting all of their nutritional requirements through their diets. Dieticians have completed a four-year degree. Nutritionists may have completed other forms of education, and you can ask for their credentials if you're interested. Both practitioners will ask patients about their current diets and make suggestions based on the information they're given. This can sometimes include meal suggestions, foods to be avoided, or supplements that can be helpful.

Dieticians and Nutritionists can help if you or your spouse have any questions about their diet and how it's affecting their well-being. Changes in diet can often improve sleep, mood, and digestion.

Dieticians and Nutritionist services are not covered by MSP, however, some Dieticians work with teams of medical professionals and will do consults at no cost to the patient. Speak with your health care team for more information.

For more information: <http://collegeofdietitiansofbc.org/home/>

## **Massage**

Massage therapists use touch to “manipulate muscles and other soft tissues of the body.” (Bureau of Labour Studies) Massage can help relieve pain, decrease stress, improve circulation, and provide relaxation. Registered Massage Therapists (RMTs) can also give clients guidance on things to do at home, such as stretches, which can improve their mobility issues and decrease pain.

Massage is a fantastic option for your care partner if they’re experiencing pain or stress, and they’re comfortable with being touched.

Some Registered Massage Therapists are at least partially covered by MSP. Call MSP to confirm: (604) 683-7151

## **Counselling**

Counsellors help people to work through problems by asking questions and helping them to identify the roots of their issues, so that they can learn about themselves, and better manage challenging situations. Sessions can occur just once, or more often, depending on what kind of support is most beneficial.

If you or your care partner are struggling with tough emotions in your caregiving journey together, counselling might be a great option. It is especially useful if you feel stuck, or have personal issues to explore that aren’t comfortable to talk about with friends or family. Sometimes having an unbiased person to speak with about the “tough stuff” can be just what you need to feel more resilient and hopeful.

Counselling is not covered by MSP, unless offered through a clinical program. Speak with your health care team for more information, or check if your health insurance covers sessions with a Registered Clinical Counsellor. Some counsellors offer sliding scale sessions.

## **Music Therapy**

Music Therapists use music to “assess emotional well-being, physical health, social functioning, communication abilities, and cognitive skills through musical responses; design music sessions for individuals and groups based on client needs using music improvisation, receptive music listening, song writing, lyric discussion, music and imagery, music performance, and learning through music; participate in interdisciplinary treatment planning, ongoing evaluation, and follow up.” (American Music Therapy Association)

Music Therapy can be very useful if your loved one is experiencing high levels of stress or sadness, or if they’re physically limited by their illness or disability.

Some Music Therapy is offered through health programs, such as Vancouver Coastal Health’s Every Day Counts. Speak with your health care team for more information.

For more information on Music Therapy: <https://musicheals.ca/what-is-music-therapy>