

## ABSTRACT

The fame of traditional Thai massage and herbal treatments is globally renowned. Thai massage is a method of treating illness that has been used in Thailand for more than 2,500 years. This researcher aimed to collect perceptions about traditional Thai massage (to reveal any problems regarding the reputation of Thai massage) and, in particular, to examine the perceived benefits of Thai massage for persons with some history of depression and/or stress.

Because it was a discovery-based study, a qualitative research design was used. The subjects were all persons with an admitted history of either depression and/or stress, as determined by a local psychiatrist. The narrative data provided by the participants were analyzed by separating into meaning units (translated, if required), and the general structure of their experience across subjects was discussed.

During the massage, the subjects felt that it helped them to feel relaxed, reduced their tension, suppressed their mental stress, and relieved depression, all of which point to some psychological improvement. In fact, it appears that Thai massage as therapy may be a fairly effective and culturally appropriate adjunct treatment option for Thai people for the treatment of both the physical and mental symptoms of distress (depression or stress), in conjunction with medication, if indicated. Further, many of the components of the Thai massage experience enhance cognitive behavioral techniques. Some of the subjects were amenable to prompting for massage if suggested by their doctor. Limitations of the design, contraindications, and suggestions for future research were also presented.