

Study Shows Back Pain Significantly Relieved by Lessons in the Alexander Technique

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A recent study published by the **British Medical Journal (BMJ)** determined that back pain can be reduced by 85% through the study of the Alexander Technique. The major clinical trial also examined massage, standard medical care under a General Practitioner, and standard aerobic exercise, finding the Alexander Technique to offer the most significant long-term benefits for patients with chronic, non-specific low-back pain.

Back pain is the leading cause of disability in Americans under 45 years old. The study determined that back pain can be reduced by the Alexander Technique's practical method of self-care taught in individualized lessons.

The technique benefits people of all ages and fitness levels. Students learn to recognize, understand and prevent the consequences of poor postural and movement habits. By improving postural tone, coordination, mobility and balance, they experience a significant reduction in back pain.

The method was created in the 1890's by F.M. Alexander. In addition to its efficacy in pain relief the Alexander Technique is used by actors, musicians and athletes to enhance their performance.

Notable students include: Sir Colin Davis, William Hurt, Jeremy Irons, James Earl Jones, Kevin Kline, Paul McCartney, Paul Newman, Lynn Redgrave, Maggie Smith, Mary Steenbergen, Sting, Robin Williams, Joanne Woodward and members of the New York Philharmonic

Orchestra. The randomized controlled trial showed significant long-term benefits for patients with chronic, non-specific low-back pain.

579 patients were involved in a multi-center clinical trial lead by General Practice (GP) researcher Professor Paul Little, University of Southampton, and GP Professor Debbie Sharp, Bristol University, and funded by the Medical Research Council and the National Health Service Research and Development Fund.² Trial results showed that 24 private lessons in the Alexander Technique led to marked improvement in function, quality of life and reduction of days in pain. One year after the trial started, and following 24 lessons, the number of days in pain was reduced to three per month compared to 21 days with pain in the control group. The average number of activities limited by back pain fell by 42%.

The trial assessed benefits provided by Alexander Technique lessons, classical massage and conventional medical care. Half the patients allocated to each intervention also received a prescription for general aerobic exercise (30 minutes of brisk walking or the equivalent each day). Of all the approaches tested, 24 Alexander Technique lessons, at least half taken within the first three months of the trial, proved to be the most beneficial.