



Developing a Strong Evidence Base for Shiatsu

SSUK Member Sharing Space
11/11/2024

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Agenda

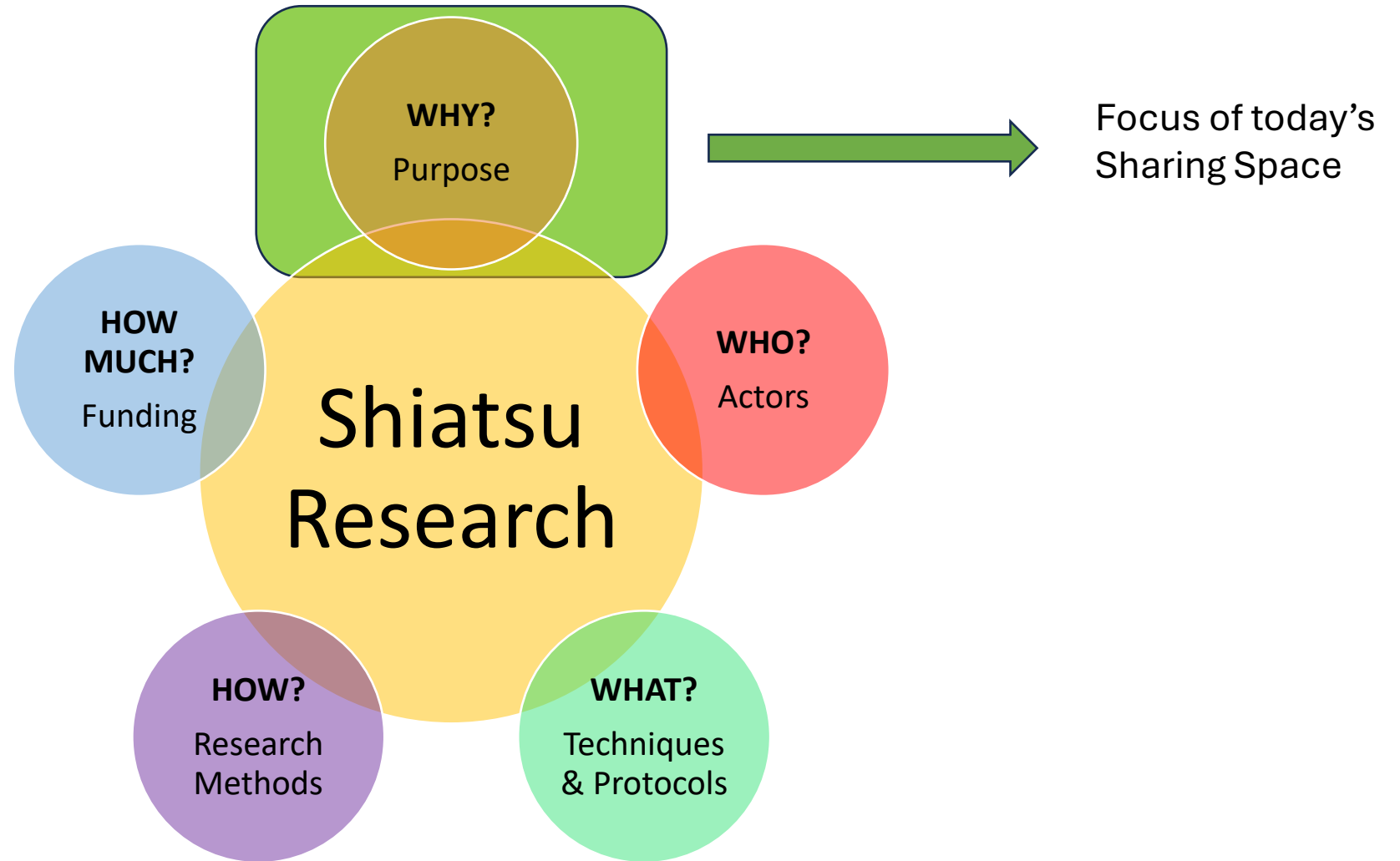
1. Welcome and Round of Introductions (5mins)
2. Current Research Landscape and Recognition State of Play (10mins)
3. Identifying Priority Research Areas for Shiatsu's Effectiveness for Specific Health Conditions and Symptoms (20mins)
4. Taking a Strategic Approach for Shiatsu Research (20mins)
5. Next Steps (5mins)

Welcome and Round of Introductions:

- Name
- Location
- Experience with research
- What is your dream for the role of Shiatsu in society?

Current Research Landscape and Recognition State of Play

Key Aspects of Shiatsu Research



Why do Research on Shiatsu?

- To gain stronger **recognition** as a Complementary Therapy:
 - by the Advertising Standards Agency (ASA)
 - by the NHS
 - By other complementary therapists
 - By potential clients
 - By the general public
- To create a larger **scientific knowledge base** about Shiatsu to prove the:
 - **efficacy** (intervention produces expected result under ideal circumstances)
 - **effectiveness** (degree of beneficial effect under “real world” clinical settings) of Shiatsu for specific health conditions and symptoms

To make Shiatsu:

- More widely accessible (cost reimbursement)
- More widely accessed
- Better known
- Get more referrals (clients!)



Shiatsu Research databases are international and scattered

- SSUK database
- Shiatsu Research Network (SRN) database
- <https://www.shiatsu-france.com/article-les-articles-scientifiques-sur-le-shiatsu.html>
- et al.

→ Are there any papers or databases that you are aware of?

Advertising Standards Agency (ASA) - Recognition State of Play on Shiatsu

What is Shiatsu?

- Shiatsu is a Japanese massage. Practitioners believe the therapy can be used to stimulate the body's healing ability by applying pressure to points across the body.

What types of claim are likely to be acceptable?

- Claims that the massage can help with relaxation, improve mood, aid sleep and relieve tension are likely to be acceptable



What types of claim are likely to be a problem?

- Claims that go beyond those relating to improving a sense of well-being and aiding relaxation are likely to be a problem without a robust body of clinical evidence (Rule 12.1).
- See [CAP Guidance on the level of substantiation required for health, beauty and slimming claims](#).

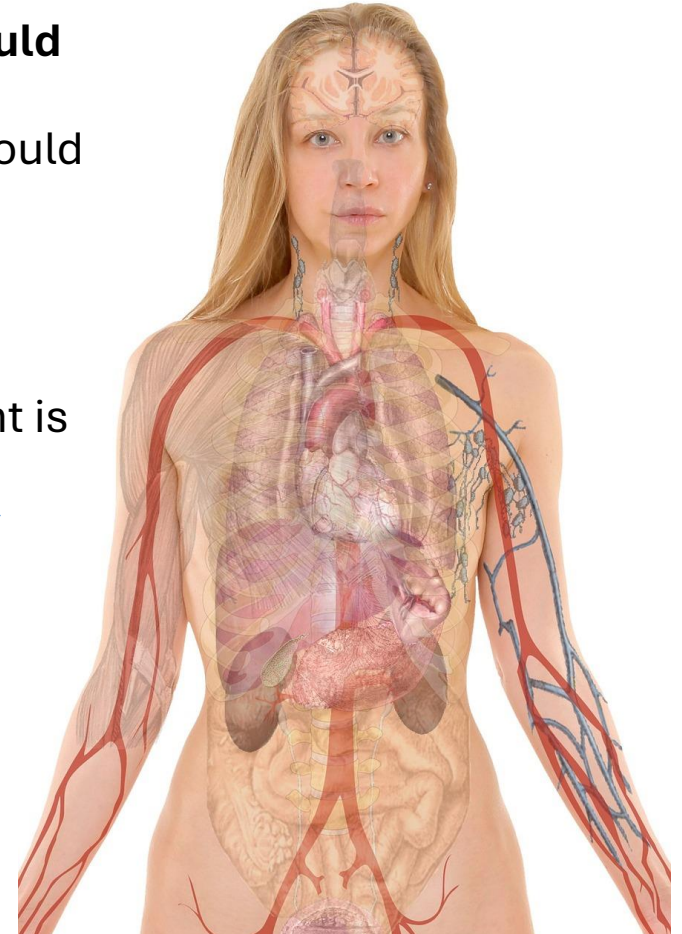
Advertising Standards Agency on Shiatsu (ctd.)

What about references to conditions for which medical supervision should be sought?

- Claims to offer treatment on conditions for which medical supervision should be sought are likely to be considered to discourage essential treatment unless that treatment is carried out under the supervision of a suitably qualified health professional (12.2).
- Claims to treat serious mental or psychological conditions are likely to be considered claims to treat serious medical conditions and practitioners should not refer to the treatment of these conditions unless that treatment is to be carried out by a suitably qualified health professional. See [CAP Guidance on referencing medical conditions in ads for health, beauty and slimming products and services](#).

Also see:

- [‘Therapies: Massage and Body Work’](#).
- [Guidance on Health Therapies and Evidence QA \(Sept 2011\)](#)



Three types of Claims under the ASA

“Marketing communications must not suggest that their claims are universally accepted if a significant division of informed or scientific opinion exists.”

1. Sensory/impressionistic subjective claims

- Claims that cannot be proved objectively, such as “no other shower gel leaves you feeling fresher”, might be understood to be opinion or might only require satisfactory consumer research to back them up.

2. Uncontroversial/established objective claims

These might constitute satisfactory proof for uncontroversial/established claims:

- A clear and concise account of the physiological effect of a product on the intended subjects, perhaps supported by an expert opinion (provided this reflects general scientific opinion, i.e. is accepted, or likely to be accepted, by most relevant experts);
- Information contained in authoritative reports, reputable guidelines or other published material that represents or reflects general scientific opinion. For example, in relation to beauty claims, reports published by the Journal of the Society of Cosmetic Chemists, the British Journal of Dermatology and the Journal of Investigative Dermatology.

3. “New” objective claims

- For “new” or “breakthrough” claims, sound data, relevant to the claim made, should be collated to form a body of evidence. The “totality” of this evidence is important; marketers should not ignore sound data that does not support the “new” claim. There are now generally recognised ways of collating existing data (where it is not immediately available) by conducting a systematic review of all available scientific evidence and evaluating it for its relevance (e.g. by using standardised data extraction procedures and electronic databases).

For “new” Claims - Acceptable Evidence for health and slimming claims (excluding food and food supplements) for ASA

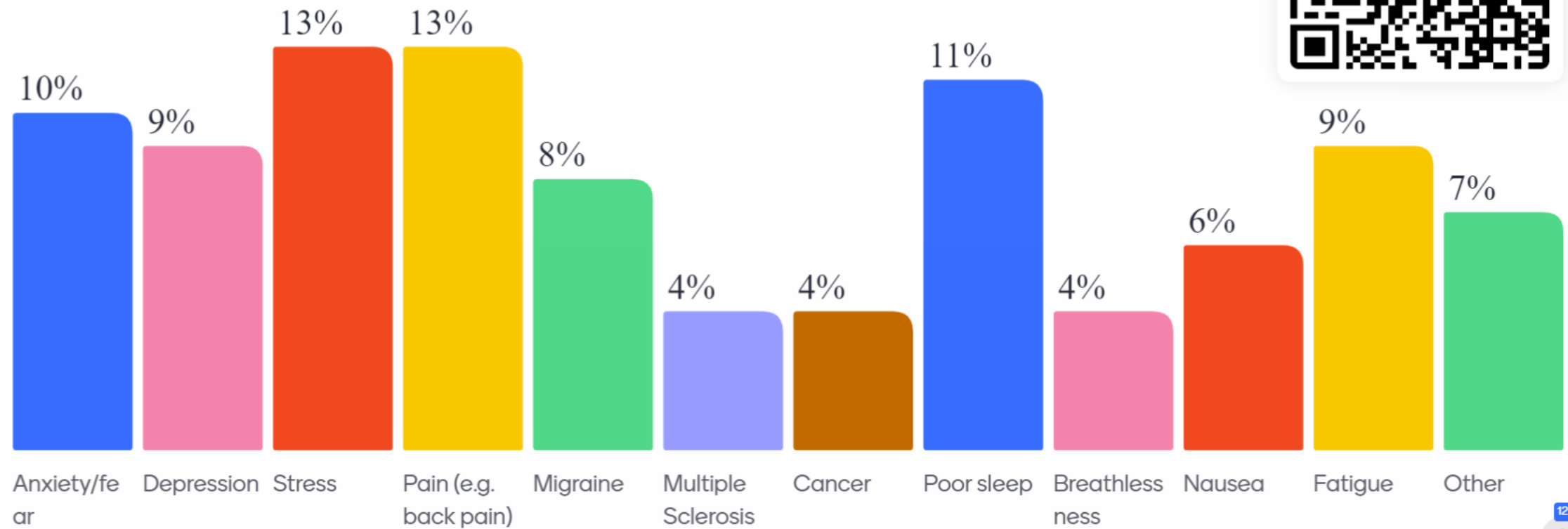
A body of evidence might consist of one or more of these categories:

- experimental human studies in which an “intervention” group (or groups) of human subjects uses the product under examination and a “control” group uses a control, with neither subjects (**single-blind**) nor researchers taking the measurements (**double-blind**) knowing which subjects are in which group (sometimes referred to as **clinical studies** or **placebo-controlled trials**);
- observational human studies in which a group or groups of people are studied in their environment (sometimes called **epidemiological studies**);
- an appropriate **expert’s extrapolation** of relevant findings from seemingly irrelevant human studies (e.g. where a product’s proven effect on ill people provides the basis of proving the proposed effect on those healthy people that the marketers wish to target);
- studies without human subjects (e.g. **biochemical, cellular or animal studies**);
- **before and after studies** with little or no control;
- **self-assessment studies** (to support objective statements that can be ascertained only by consumer observation);
- **published and unpublished literature** (perhaps supporting the rationale behind a claim);
- **anecdotal evidence** such as testimonials and endorsements.

From: [CAP Guidance on referencing medical conditions in ads for health, beauty and slimming products and services](#)

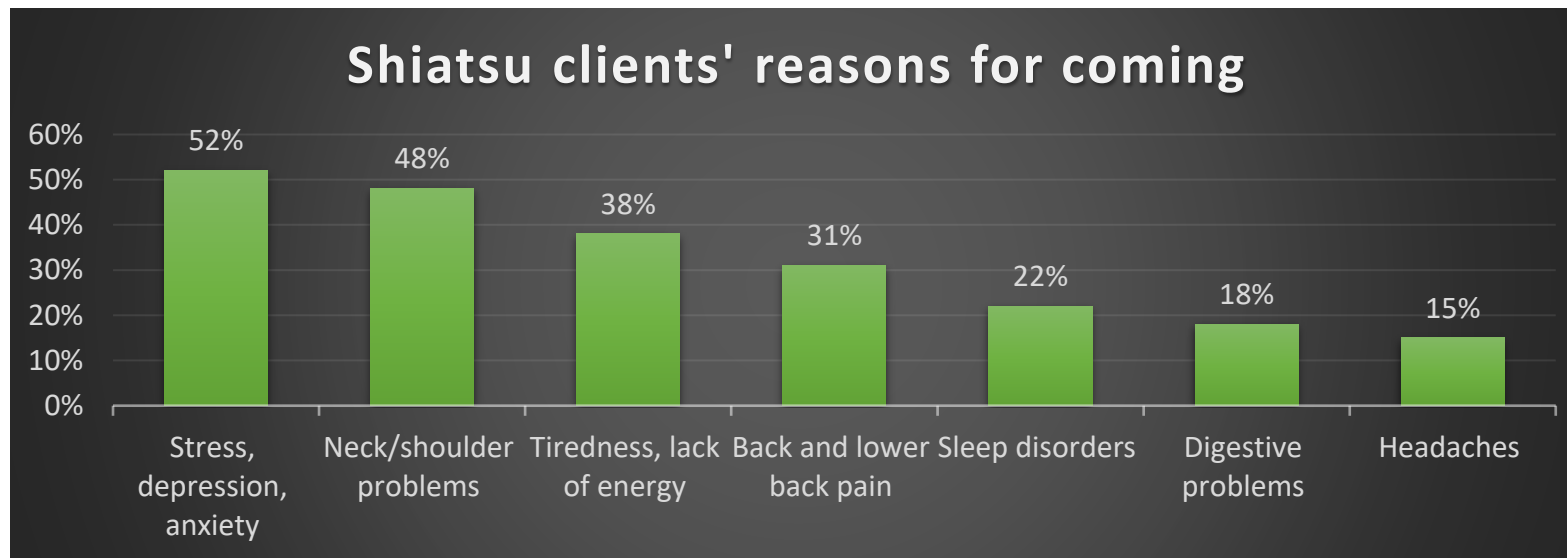
Identifying Priority Research Areas for Shiatsu's Effectiveness for Specific Health Conditions and Symptoms

For which health conditions has Shiatsu benefitted clients?



Establishing Shiatsu as a Therapy – What issues do Shiatsu clients present with?

A survey of around 800 Shiatsu clients in the UK by SSUK in 1998 revealed the following ranking of the most important reasons for coming:



Conclusion:

It was concluded that **efficacy research in Shiatsu should focus on musculoskeletal and psychological problems particularly neck/shoulder and lower back problems, arthritis, depression, stress and anxiety.**

Paper: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S096522999880054X>

Taking a Strategic Approach for Shiatsu Research

What steps can we take to develop a Shiatsu Research Strategy?



- Analyse existing evidence base (based on SSUK and SRN databases, Shiatsu France et al.)
- Developing research collaborations with universities, associations (e.g. Association of Reflexologists) and/or other countries to create representative and clinically significant results (e.g. [CocoZ tools](#) project from the Netherlands)
- gathering case studies
- Looking for funding opportunities
- Do an update of the 1998 survey conducted by SSUK where 397 Shiatsu clients were surveyed for their reasons to have Shiatsu?
- Write summaries of results and findings of scientific studies, or pilot projects related to benefits of having Shiatsu in the Shiatsu Society Journal (from 2011 SSUK member survey)
- Organise a Research Day workshop to develop research skills in the Shiatsu community (planned for autumn 2025 by Leisa Bellmore)



→ What other ideas do you have?

Next Steps

Next Steps for increasing the recognition of Shiatsu

- Get on the Shiatsu Hub Email list by emailing: Kathi@shiatsusociety.org
- Notify us of any Shiatsu-related research you become aware of or are involved in
- Help develop the SSUK Research Strategy
- Reach out to potential collaborators (universities, other complementary therapy organisations, students, GP surgeries) for developing new research
- Identify and contact potential research grant funding programmes

→ What other ideas do you have?



THANK YOU!

**All hands on deck for raising the
profile of Shiatsu!**

Get involved by emailing:
Kathi@shiatsusociety.org or
Barbara@shiatsusociety.org

