

BY ANNE BRAMHAM



the perfect touch

MANUAL LYMPH DRAINAGE

FOR CANCER SURVIVORS, THE GLOW of a clear, healthy complexion is one of the best medicines and the manual lymph drainage (MLD) technique from Emil Vodder, Ph.D., happens to provide the perfect dose. Analgesic, anti-inflammatory, decongestive and restorative, MLD provides deep relaxation while accelerating cellular repair and regeneration, and excels in the art of esthetic oncology.

History

Developed by Danish-born Dr. Emil Vodder in the 1930s, MLD was first embraced by the European esthetic industry because of its dramatic ability to improve the skin's appearance. Practicing in Cannes on the French Riviera with his wife, Estrid, most of the Vodders' patients were British residents who were there to recover from chronic colds caused by the damp climate. All of the patients had swollen lymph nodes in the neck. Intuitively, Dr. Vodder began to treat the lymph nodes. Within days, the patients' sinuses opened, complexions cleared and news of Dr. Vodder's pioneering work began to spread.

Endorsed years later by the international medical community for its therapeutic value in treating cancer-related lymphedema, MLD is now practiced in clinics throughout the world. When I had the privilege of opening the first MLD hospital-based lymphedema treatment center in Florida in 1995, it was one

of just a few MLD clinics in the United States. Today, there are hundreds.

MLD's steady, enduring growth reflects an expanding awareness of the versatility of this powerful, yet gentle modality. Indicated for the treatment of more than 60 pathologies, MLD continues to attract the attention of estheticians and health care professionals. Skin conditions, in general, respond favorably to MLD's ability to facilitate oxygen and nutrient delivery to the cells.

In recent years, post cancer care has generated considerable interest within the spa and esthetic industry. Working with individuals who are recovering from serious illnesses can be one of the most gratifying professional experiences a therapist has, however, it requires a thorough understanding of how to safely and ethically provide quality care. What treatments would best serve the client? What treatments should be avoided? What are the contraindications?

While working with post cancer clients, it is important to recognize their specific needs. Understanding the road they have traveled should be considered a prerequisite before embarking on any course of action. Consider these matters. Did they receive chemotherapy? Were lymph nodes removed? What other medical treatments were prescribed? Always avoid harsh treatments that cause pain or inflammation. Focus instead on gentle, nurturing treatments that will have a positive impact on the

brain's neuropeptides. Pleasant aromas in the treatment room will also help, as will a warm and relaxing ambiance.

Four levels of benefits

Dr. Vodder often referred to MLD as the "great normalizer" because of its ability to re-establish homeostasis. Subtle and light to the touch, Dr. Vodder's MLD provides the post cancer client with deep, healing relaxation. Nurturing and rehabilitative, MLD is perfectly suited for the purpose of rest and rejuvenation for the client recovering from a serious illness.

MLD has four major effects: sympatholytic, analgesic, drainage and immune response.

Sympatholytic: Referring to the deep relaxation response MLD induces, sympatholytic literally means a reduced activity of the sympathetic nervous system and an ensuing rise in parasympathetic activity. Slow and rhythmic in application, MLD engages the autonomic nervous system, suppressing the sympathetic response while encouraging parasympathetic activity. Often referred to as our "alert state," the sympathetic nervous system dominates most of our waking hours. The parasympathetic nervous system is active in relaxation and sleep, and plays a vital role in the healing process.

Cancer and ensuing aggressive treatments, such as chemotherapy and irradiation, generate enormous amounts

continues

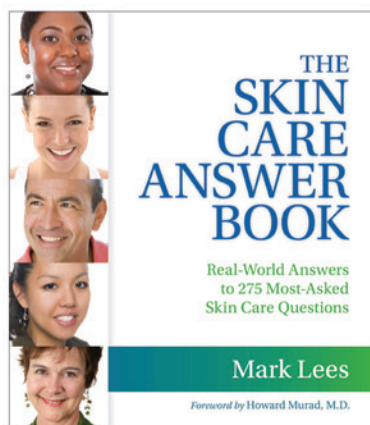


• ACTIVE CANCER

- MLD is a contraindication for clients with active cancer on the face or
- neck. Before providing palliative care, you must seek their physician's
- permission to see if they can receive MLD. Be sure to check with their
- doctor if the client is also undergoing chemotherapy.

• **NOTE:** Palliative care is specialized medical care or treatment that

- focuses on reducing the pain, symptoms and stress of the serious illness.



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of physical and emotional stress. By "normalizing" the body, the sympatholytic effect of MLD addresses the heart of the matter by inducing deep relaxation, thus engaging the parasympathetic nervous system. Studies have indicated that collagen and elastin fibers respond negatively to the stimuli of stress and anxiety. In a state of rest and relaxation, the reverse is true: collagen and elastin fibers repair and rejuvenate.

Analgesic: MLD stimulates receptors in the skin that carry messages of relief/pleasure to the central nervous system, and therefore effectively combats pain. MLD's influence on the touch receptors overrides the pain stimuli, leaving the client comfortable and free of nagging pain. During this process, the sympathetic nervous system is quieted, which allows the parasympathetic side to become active. This is important since the body repairs itself only when in a state of deep relaxation. By removing waste materials from the system (lactic acid or noxious chemicals secreted under a pain stimulus) MLD addresses the source of the problem.

Drainage: By its very nature, MLD is anti-inflammatory. By removing cellular debris from the tissue and transporting it into the lymphatic system, where the action of macrophage destroys invading micro-organisms and foreign materials, MLD encourages the delivery of fresh nutrients and oxygen to the cells, and in effect, accelerates the healing process.

Immune response: Physical and emotional stress weaken the immune system. Lymph nodes reproduce lymphocytes, which are the cells responsible for our immune reaction. These cells play a vital role in recovery. By increasing lymph flow into the nodes, we encourage the destruction of pathogens. When the tissues are in a pristine state, unfriendly bacteria cannot thrive.

Post cancer care

By becoming familiar with the theoretical aspects of MLD and understanding its effects, one begins to appreciate the inspired genius of Dr. Vodder. A pioneer in a field without precedent, MLD is now recognized in medical and spa wellness communities throughout the world. ■

Anne Bramham is a respected industry mentor with more than 30 years of professional experience as a consultant and trainer of spa therapies. She is the founder of American Spa Therapy Education Curriculum Council (ASTECC) and an instructor for the Dr. Vodder School of North America. The ASTECC curriculum has been adopted by top destination spas throughout the U.S.



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