

A massage pallor

In which our hero submits himself to the horrors of therapeutic massage.

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The other day he had a massage. No, not *that* kind of massage so graphically advertised and illustrated in the back pages of the *Georgia Straight* (so I am told).

He had a therapeutic massage, although the proponents of the above might argue that theirs is also in aid of their clients' well being.

The patient had sustained a very bad fall in the recent ice storms, landing heavily on his right thigh. Subsequent examination, including X-rays, had revealed "a severe soft tissue injury to the lateral aspect of the right upper leg."

That is doctor-speak for having bugged up everything except the bone itself.

Massive bruising had ensued and he thought that when this had resolved, all would be well.

Wrong.

Calcium was deposited in the blood clot, followed by fibrous tissue resulting in a long, hard, painful internal scar. Hence the need for physiotherapy.

This was to be administered by a very large, genial Scotsman who possessed great manual strength and a keen, pawky sense of humor.

"You should have been here a long time ago," he said.



Head down, the patient muttered his apologetic agreement.

There then ensued a series of passive exercises devised, he thought, during the Spanish Inquisition. These were designed to stretch the affected part and they certainly seemed to do so if pain can be related to success.

The physio then pronounced a mantra that he was to repeat often: "This may be a wee bit nippy."

Whereupon he seized the offending limb and proceeded to squeeze, pummel, and knead the muscles in a manner such as to make the patient yip and yelp like a kicked puppy. At the conclusion of this act of therapeutic barbarism, the patient was told, "Just lie there a wee while before you try to get up." No kidding.

When he did sit up, he gazed in alarm at the pale elderly person in the mirror as they both struggled to don their trousers.

"A wee bit nippy," you say. My God!

Tottering to the desk, he was temporarily relieved of his credit card, and told "We'd better see you again in a week." Oh NO!

As he left the clinic, he did wonder if the other kind of massage might, after all, be better. Aromatic oils, warm towels, fluttering nubile females. But no, that was not really his scene, his style.

The secrecy, the guilt, the possibility of discovery and the resulting embarrassment, oh no, he couldn't possibly, no, no.

And besides, I might do myself *another* serious injury.

Dr Fraser is retired from pediatric general surgery at BC Children's Hospital, where he was head of surgery. He enjoys reading, writing, and erratic golf.