PORTABLE BAR APPARATUS

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ABSTRACT

A portable bar apparatus for use in massage treatments. The present invention provides a portable bar apparatus for use in massage treatments utilizing foot pressure. The portable bar apparatus is collapsible for ease of transport and storage. The apparatus, in a preferred embodiment, includes two substantially triangular shaped end supports with two parallel bars mounted on the upper ends of the end supports.
Figure 3

Figure 4
PORTABLE BAR APPARATUS

BACKGROUND OF INVENTION

[0001] Massage therapy, or as it is commonly referred to, bodywork, is an important non-surgical therapeutic treatment to relieve mental and physical stresses, chronic conditions such as low back pain, arthritis, bursitis as well as physical rehabilitation. Massage therapy and bodywork is commonly defined as the application of various techniques to the muscular structure and soft tissues of the human body. There are many forms of massage and/or bodywork treatments including such traditional massage therapy techniques as deep tissue, myofascial release, reflexology, Reiki, Rosen method, Swedish massage (including techniques such as effleurage, friction, petrissage), tapotement, trigger point, oriental-based systems such as shiatsu and acupressure, and other techniques. Each of these different treatments have different approaches and benefits.

[0002] Often, certain of these techniques, such as shiatsu and acupressure, require the therapist to exert considerable wrist and thumb pressure in order to be effective. This is particularly necessary in order to provide deep tissue relief or when working with tightly muscularized patients. This has led to pain and chronic injury to many therapists using such techniques.

[0003] Many therapists have turned to foot pressure methods to improve the relief to their patients as well as to reduce wrist and thumb injuries. These techniques include such therapies as barefoot Shiatsu mat work where a patient lies on a mat and a therapist applies massage through bare feet. This particular technique is difficult to apply because the therapist is unsupported and the entire body weight is on the patient. Occasionally, a therapist may use a nearby chair or even a walker to partially support their body weight during a treatment. However, this can cause the therapist to be off-balance and can hinder an effective massage therapy session.

[0004] A particular form of massage therapy has been developed to provide the benefits of foot pressure massage without the detriments described above. An example of this form of massage therapy was developed by Ruthie Hardee, Denver, Colo., that is referred to as Ashiatsu Oriental Bar Therapy. This technique of bodywork combines the use of parallel overhead bars to enable the therapist to control and support their personal body weight while conscientiously influences the pressure of the therapist's feet. The strokes are performed with smooth, flowing, gliding pressure using all parts of the foot.

[0005] One problem with this massage modality is the necessity of overhead bars. Typically, the bars are hard-mounted into a ceiling structure to ensure safety of the therapist. This limits the use of this technique to rooms with relatively low ceilings and to permanently mounted bars. This is a detriment to the use of this therapy as many therapists frequently travel to spas, health and fitness organizations, sporting events, clients' homes and other locations.

[0006] Thus a problem presently exists in the lack of a portable apparatus to enable supported barefoot massage treatments to be done at remote locations.
DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0024] The present invention provides an apparatus for use in providing massage treatment. In a preferred embodiment, the apparatus is particularly useful for providing Ashiatsu massage therapy. It is to be expressly understood that the descriptive embodiments set forth herein are intended for explanatory purposes and are not intended to unduly limit the scope of the claimed inventions. Other embodiments and applications not described herein are considered to be within the scope of the invention. It is also to be expressly understood that while specific embodiments for the components of the apparatus are discussed, other equivalents to these embodiments that perform substantially similar functions are within the scope of the claimed inventions.

[0025] A preferred embodiment of the present invention is illustrated in FIGS. 1-8. In this preferred embodiment, described herein for explanatory purposes and not to limit the scope of the claimed inventions, the apparatus 10 includes two parallel bars 20, 22 suspended between end supports 30, 32. In this preferred embodiment, massage table 12 is mounted to the end supports 30, 32. It is to be expressly understood that the massage table 12 could also be free standing between the supports, or mounted in another manner.

[0026] In the embodiment described in FIG. 1, apparatus 10 is intended to be portable for ease of transport and storage. End support 30 includes bottom supports 34, 36 extending angularly upward, and opposing bottom supports 38, 40 also extending angularly upward. Top brackets 42, 44 are attached to the upper ends of the bottom supports 34, 36 and 38, 40, respectively. Bottom member 46 attaches to the lower ends of bottom supports 34, 36 and 38, 40. In this preferred embodiment, cross-member 48 extends between the bottom supports at the level of the massage table 12. Upper cross-member 50 extends between top brackets 42, 44.

[0027] End support 32 is constructed in a similar manner with bottom supports 54, 56 and 58, 60 extending angularly upward and attached to top brackets 62, 64. Bottom member 66 attaches to the lower ends of the bottom supports with cross-member 68 extending between the bottom supports at a mid section. Upper cross-member 70 extends between the top brackets 62, 64.

[0028] In a preferred embodiment, the attachment of the bottom supports to the top brackets includes an adjustment mechanism 72 to allow the height of the apparatus 10 to be adjusted. This adjustment mechanism can be a plurality of spaced holes, slots or other well-known adjustment devices.

[0029] The top bars 20, 22 are fastened to the top brackets 42, 44 and 62, 64, as shown in FIG. 2. In a preferred embodiment, the spacing between the top bars 20, 22 may be adjusted as well.

[0030] In a preferred embodiment, the various supports, brackets, cross-members, bars and other components are sized to fit within a travel bag. These components are attached to one another by screws, bolts, nuts, snap-fasteners, dowels and/or other attachment devices that can be easily tightened and loosened by hand or with simple tools.

[0031] In use, the components are laid out prior to assembly. The upper cross-member 50 is inserted in top brackets 42, 44, as shown in FIGS. 3 and 4, and bolted together. In this preferred embodiment, although not shown, bolts with star wheels for ease of use are utilized to allow assembly by hand. The bottom supports 34, 36 are then bolted onto top bracket 42, as shown in FIG. 5 and bottom supports 38, 40 are bolted onto top bracket 44. Cross-member 48 is then bolted to bottom supports 38, 40 (shown in FIG. 6) and to bottom supports 34, 36. Bottom member 46 is bolted to bottom supports 38, 40 and to bottom supports 34, 36. The assembled end support 30 is shown in FIG. 7. End support 32 is assembled in a similar manner with its respective components.

[0032] The parallel bars 20, 22 are then bolted onto the underside of the top brackets 42, 62 and 44, 64, respectively, as shown in FIG. 8. The assembled apparatus can then be rolled, lifted or tilted over into its upright position shown in FIGS. 1 and 2.

[0033] It is to be expressly understood that the components of the apparatus can be assembled in any desired order. The height and spacing of the top bars 20, 22 above the massage table 12 can be adjusted to fit the therapist or person using the apparatus as well. The apparatus can be quickly assembled as well as disassembled for transport and storage.

[0034] In the preferred embodiment, the components are formed of wood, plastic, aluminum or other lightweight, high-strength structural materials. The massage table 12 can be an integral part of the apparatus or an add-on component. Typically, the massage table may be a foldable table for ease of transport and storage.

[0035] Another preferred embodiment is illustrated in FIGS. 9 and 10. The apparatus 100 of this preferred embodiment includes end supports 110, 112 formed of telescoping poles 114, 116, 118, 120 that lock in place with sleeves 122. Alternatively, the end support poles may be in sections that snap together (with or without tensioning cords) or are otherwise fastened together. Bottom side members 126, 128 are also secured to the end support poles and include locking arms 130.

[0036] Bottom cross-members 132, 134 extend between bottom side members 126, 128 and are attached thereto. Upper cross-members 136, 138 attach between the poles 114, 116 and 118, 120 respectively. The poles 114, 116 and 118, 120 attach at their upper ends, respectively. Pole members 140, 142 are mounted to the support poles 114, 118 and 116, 120, respectively as well. The pole members can be secured by locking arms 144, if desired as well.
In use, this preferred embodiment can be quickly assembled by snapping the components together, or if telescoping, then slid and locked into place. This embodiment is intended for use with a free-standing massage table.

Other embodiments of the present invention are also contemplated using different types of easily assembled, yet sturdy structures. Essentially, the apparatus of the present invention include a stable base with at least one and usually two parallel bars extending horizontally over a massage table.

The present invention provides a stable apparatus for allowing properly trained massage therapists to support their weight in order to apply pressure from their body weight in massage therapy to clients. This greatly reduces the stress on wrists, hands and arms while providing a deep massage to clients. The present invention enables therapists to serve their clientele in a variety of settings without the need of an existing hard-mounted apparatus.

It is to be expressly understood that these descriptive embodiments are not meant to limit the scope of the claimed inventions, and that the claimed inventions are intended to encompass other equivalent structures and mechanisms for performing the equivalent functions.

1. A bar apparatus for use in massage treatments, said bar apparatus comprising:
   a. first end support;
   b. second end support;
   c. a massage table between said first end support and said second end support; and
   d. at least one horizontal bar attached to said first end support and said second end support, said at least one horizontal bar suspended above said massage table.

2. The bar apparatus of claim 1 wherein said bar apparatus includes:
   a. said first end support having a wider lower portion than the upper portion; and
   b. said second end support having a wider lower portion than the upper portion.

3. The bar apparatus of claim 1 wherein said bar apparatus includes:
   a. said at least one horizontal bar includes two parallel spaced bars extending between said first end support and said second end support.

4. The bar apparatus of claim 1 wherein said bar apparatus includes:
   a. components that are disassembled into a compact form for transport and storage.

5. The bar apparatus of claim 1 wherein said bar apparatus includes:
   a. a first bar on said first end support;
   b. a second bar on said first end support;
   c. a first upper bracket connecting said first bar and said second bar on said first end support;
   d. a first bar on said second end support;
   e. a second bar on said second end support; and
   f. a second upper bracket connecting said first bar and said second bar on said second end support.

6. The bar apparatus of claim 1 wherein said bar apparatus further includes:
   a. a first cross member extending across said first end support for supporting said massage table; and
   b. a second cross member extending across said second end support for supporting said massage table.

7. A portable bar apparatus for use in massage treatments, said portable bar apparatus comprising:
   a. first end support, said first end support including a first bar member, a second bar member and a first upper bracket connecting said first bar member and said second bar member;
   b. a second end support, said second end support including a third bar member, a fourth bar member and a second upper bracket connecting said third bar member and said fourth bar member;
   c. first pole member extending between the upper portion of said first end support and the upper portion of said second end support; and
   d. a second pole member extending between the upper portion of said first support member and the upper portion of said second end support; said second pole member spaced from and substantially parallel to said first pole member.

8. The portable bar apparatus of claim 7, wherein said portable bar apparatus further includes:
   a. a massage table beneath said first pole member and said second pole member.

9. The portable bar apparatus of claim 7 wherein said portable bar apparatus includes:
   a. said first bar member, said second bar member, said third bar member and said fourth bar member are collapsible for ease of transport and storage.

10. The portable bar apparatus of claim 7 wherein said portable bar apparatus includes:
   a. said first end support and said second end support being in a substantially triangular shape having a wider lower portion than said upper portion.

11. A method for providing massage treatment using a portable bar apparatus having a first end support; a second end support and two parallel spaced bars extending between the upper portions of said first end support and said second end support, said method comprising the steps of:
   a. providing a table beneath said two parallel spaced bars for a patient to lie upon;
   b. grasping at least one of said two parallel spaced bars to control and support the weight of a user;
   c. applying pressure from the foot of the user to the patient on said table.

12. The method of claim 11 wherein said method further includes:
   a. providing a wider lower portion on each of said first end support and said second end support than the upper portion of said end supports.

13. The method of claim 11 wherein said method further includes:
   a. said first end support and said second end supports are collapsible for ease of transport and storage.