



# User Guide

AMT graded research resource

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## Introducing AMT's massage therapy research resource

In 2013, the Association of Massage Therapists (AMT) published a Classified Massage Therapy Research Database using the National Health and Medical Research Council evidence hierarchy. The establishment of this resource was a response to the Australian Government 2014 Natural Therapies Review.

In 2024, AMT embarked on a project to update its classified research resource, using new bibliographic tools and artificial intelligence (AI) to critically appraise and grade evidence. The first stage of this evidence-grading project encompasses systematic reviews and meta-analyses of massage therapy. This tranche of work was completed in March 2024.

AMT plans to continue the work of grading other levels of evidence included in the research resource.

## Search strategy

PubMed and the Cochrane Library were searched for articles published from 2000 to 2024.

The following search string was used to search [PubMed](#), a free resource supporting the search and retrieval of biomedical and life sciences literature:



(massage[Title]) AND (massage[MeSH terms])

The following search string was used to search the [Cochrane Library](#), a collection of high-quality, independent evidence to inform healthcare decision-making:



Massage:ti,kw

**MeSH** stands for Medical Subject Headings and is the system used to index articles in the National Library of Medicine's repository, PubMed.

**kw** stands for keyword and is the indexing system used in the Cochrane Library.

Data from these searches was exported to [Zotero](#), a free, online referencing tool which has been used to organise, annotate, and share the research resource. Data was also exported to an [Excel Spreadsheet](#), which contains links to the studies online and their abstracts. It is less feature-rich and searchable than the publicly accessible Zotero library.

Studies have been classified into three broad categories:

1. Systematic reviews and meta-analyses
2. Clinical Trials
3. Other kinds of reviews (e.g. narrative, qualitative)

## Exclusions

Studies that fall outside the routine scope of practice for massage therapy have been excluded. Research relating to massage of the perineum, prostate and meibomian glands of the eye meet the threshold for exclusion.

## Grading the evidence

Two AI tools were used to assess and grade the quality of the evidence.

### CASP GPT

CASP GPT is an AI critical appraisal tool developed at Bond University. It uses Critical Appraisal Checklists to assess studies for trustworthiness, results, and relevance. The critical appraisal checklists facilitate easy and accurate critical appraisal across different study types. The systematic review checklist consists of 10 questions which are designed to assess the validity, results, and applicability of a study.

Results from the CASP-GPT Critical Appraisal of Systematic Reviews tool were used to provide a critical assessment framework for the systematic reviews included in this resource. They can be accessed in the notes section of Zotero. This feature is not available in the Excel version of the resource.

### Evidence-based Practice GPT

The Evidence-based Practice GPT is an AI critical appraisal tool developed by Ernesto Barrera Linares. It was used to grade the reliability of the findings of systematic reviews.

It is important to note that the Evidence-based practice GPT gradings of meta-analyses do not necessarily reflect the quality of the meta-analysis but rather the quality and reliability of the individual studies reported on.

The problem of "garbage in, garbage out" (GIGA) is reflected in these AI gradings. The output of a systematic review (conclusions and reliability) is highly dependent on the quality of the input (the data and studies included in the review). Systematic reviews that report on poor quality studies and heterogeneous data are more likely to be graded lower by the AI because their conclusions are less reliable.

## The Grading Key

Based on results from the Evidence-Based Practice GPT, systematic reviews have been graded into three categories using a traffic light system based on the reliability of the conclusions:



**Green:** These studies were rated between 7 – 9. Conclusions are based on sound evidence.



**Orange:** These studies were rated between 4 – 6. Conclusions should be interpreted with some caution.



**Red:** These studies were rated between 1 and 3. Conclusions are based on poor quality studies and heterogeneous data and are likely not meaningful or reliable.

Ungraded studies are highlighted in purple. These are studies that could not be accessed.

## Accessing the research resource

The AMT research resource can be accessed through a publicly available [Zotero](#) library. The Excel spreadsheet version of the resource can be downloaded from the [AMT website](#).

For more information on how to navigate all the features in the Zotero library, please watch our [short presentation](#).



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association of massage therapists