

# SIX TIPS TO ACCESSING ACADEMIC RESEARCH FOR FREE

By Odette Wood

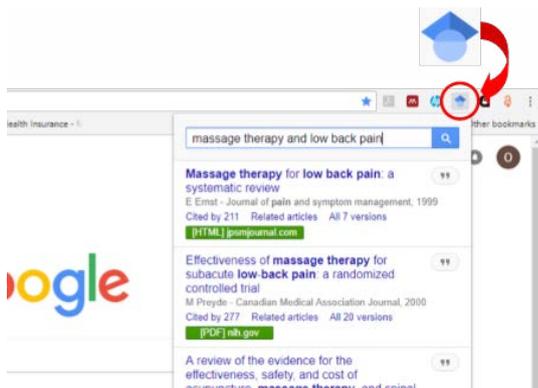
Chances are, that as a massage therapist you won't have paid access to academic journals, unless you are studying at a tertiary institution and have access through the institution (depending on where you are studying at – technical institutes and polytechs will have access but private training establishments may not); know someone who can access paid journals for you (rare but invaluable!); or you decide to invest in a subscription to a journal or are happy to purchase individual articles (pricey). The reality is that many of us don't have the ability or means to access journal articles that cost. But there are ways to access a wide range of articles for free, and legally without breaking any copyright rules.

One thing to be aware of is that there is a difference between an academic journal and a periodical. There are plenty of massage publications that are issued monthly but fit more within the "magazine" description. MNZ Magazine is one of these, as is Massage & Fitness Magazine, Massage Today and Massage & Bodywork Magazine. Great professional publications with loads of information without a doubt, but they are not peer-reviewed academic journals. To locate and access academic journals, read on!

## GOOGLE SCHOLAR

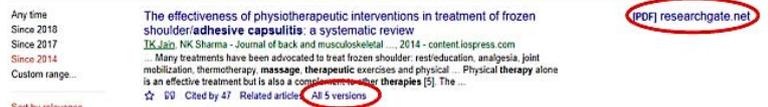
<https://scholar.google.com>

Google Scholar is the most common and popular way to access academic articles for free. It's easily accessible and all you need to do is go to the search page, type in your search term(s) and hit enter. You can download a Google Scholar button extension, which means you can search from the normal Google page by clicking on the blue mortarboard cap image next to your search bar, without having to open a separate Google Scholar page. The green highlighted text at the bottom of each citation will tell you that an open access of the article is available.



As with any journal database, it's really important to think about what search terms you want use, in order to focus your search. Searching the term "massage therapy" for example, will generate a massive amount of hits that you probably won't really want to scroll through to find the articles of relevance! So, be specific and try several search term combinations. For example, if you are wanting to find out about massage therapy for a specific condition e.g. frozen shoulder, you could try both "massage therapy and frozen shoulder" and "massage therapy and adhesive capsulitis". Then, if you want to dig down to source articles about a specific intervention such as MFR for a condition, then you might search for "myofascial release and frozen shoulder" If you want to limit the age range of the articles, you can choose one of the pre-set ranges e.g. since 2014, or create a custom range. You can sort articles by relevance or date.

If a free version of an article is available in either html or pdf format, a small link to it will appear to the right of each search result in Google Scholar and all the versions available will appear under the main link too.



If you click on the three horizontal lines at the left hand side of the main Google Scholar search page, you can select an option called Alerts. You can then set up your own search terms and you will be emailed alerts from Google Scholar any time articles falling within those search terms are added to Google Scholar. This saves you having to manually search. It won't distinguish between open access and pay to access articles however.

## UNPAYWALL

<https://unpaywall.org/>



Unpaywall is run by a non-profit organisation dedicated to making scholarship more accessible to everyone. It harvests open access articles from over 50,000 publishers and repositories and has close to 19 million free academic articles. To access Unpaywall, all you need to do is download the free extension from their website. You will need to have Chrome or Mozilla Firefox as your web browser. When you find an article you'll see a padlock tab to the right hand side of the article. The colour will indicate if it is open access. Green, gold and bronze indicates it is, grey indicates it's not. Clicking on the green/gold/bronze padlock will take you directly to the pdf of the article, which you can then download. In settings, you can choose the OA Nerd mode which will then colour-code the unlock tab to show whether full text is green (self-archiving - this is where the author has deposited their research papers in online repositories themselves), gold (where the article is free to read immediately upon publication and the open access journal is funded by article processing charges paid by authors or the research sponsor) or bronze open access (where articles are available on websites hosted by their publisher – either immediately or following an embargo – but are not formally licensed for reuse).

### OPEN ACCESS BUTTON

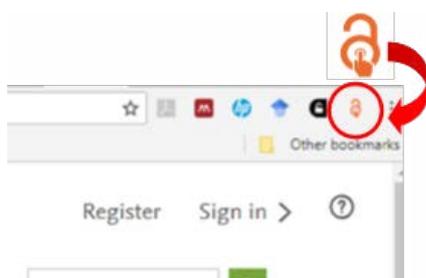
<https://openaccessbutton.org/>



The Open Access Button is another downloadable extension compatible with the Chrome browser, which will help you to find free, legally accessed articles. The extension button appears as red unlocked padlock. You have to already have the article URL, DOI, title or citation. It instantly searches for a freely accessible version of the article or dataset you need by searching through thousands of sources with millions of articles to link you to free, legal and full text articles. It will either take you straight to a free copy of the research article or help you ask the author to freely share the article with you. It is not always as comprehensive as Unpaywall and it feels a bit clunky at times, but it is a worthwhile tool to use in conjunction with the others and may result in getting access to articles through the ability to request it from the author through their system.

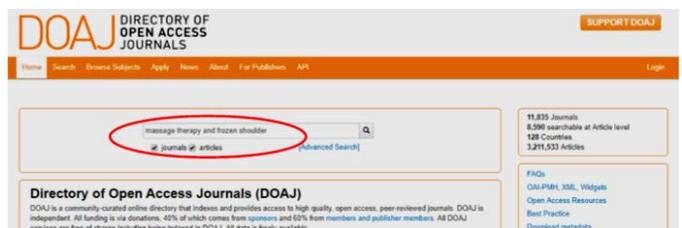
### DIRECTORY OF OPEN ACCESS JOURNALS

<https://doaj.org/>



More and more articles are now available as open access, this means that the article is available for free. Some whole journals are now becoming open access as a way of making research publicly available. The Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) is a community-curated online directory that indexes and provides access to high quality, open access, peer-reviewed journals. DOAJ is independent. All funding is via donations, 40% of which comes from sponsors and 60% from members and publisher members. All DOAJ services are free of charge including being indexed in DOAJ. All data is freely available. On the main page, type in your search term(s) and click the search button. While it searches a mass of journals, I don't find it as comprehensive as Google Scholar, Unpaywall or the Open Access Button as these have probably superseded it now, but still worth knowing about.

### BUILD YOUR OWN LIST OF JOURNALS



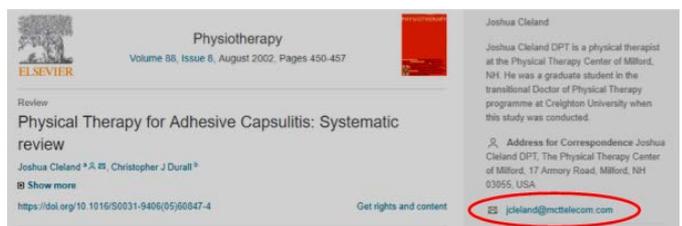
As you get more familiar with research and journals, you'll build up a picture of what open access journals you keep returning to. These may be massage-specific ones such as the International Journal of Therapeutic Massage & Bodywork (IJTMB) or ones within other related fields which you are interested in e.g. Physiotherapy, Pain etc. You can often subscribe for free to some journals or stables of journals which means you get emailed when a new issue is out and these may have a proportion of content within an issue which is free. Some journals also make their content open access after a certain time period, so a good thing to be aware of.

### CONTACTING THE AUTHOR

If you come across a journal article that you have not been able to access for free via the other avenues, one method of getting a copy of the article is to contact the author directly. Many academic authors are only too happy to share their articles for free if you ask politely and tell them you are a health professional who is interested in accessing their article but do not have academic institution access to it.

You will quite likely find that the author's email address is provided in the abstract online, and sometimes there may even be a link to their email address which you can directly click on to contact them.

If there is no email address but the academic institution they work at





is given, you can use your detective skills to search for them on Google. Chances are you will be able to find an email address for them.

Next time you are wanting to search for articles on a particular topic to find more evidence-based information to help you in your work with clients, try out the above strategies to find current information. You might be pleasantly surprised.

## REFERENCES

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# BLOGGING SCIENCE AND RESEARCH WITHOUT BORING YOUR AUDIENCE

By Nick Ng, BA, CMT

Science journalism can make you bite your knuckles for what seems like hours as you stare at the research article on PubMed, and you're just barely making it past the methods section in the abstract! No wonder why accuracy and reliability of science news in the media can be as misleading as most infomercials on television. In addition to the jargon, hieroglyphical statistics, abbreviations, and run-on sentences, journalists also have to deal with deadlines, editors, proofreading, emails to corresponding researchers who don't reply on time, interpreting the press release, and more deadlines. On top of all that, how do you carve a story out of dry data so you may have an advantage over your news competitors?

Fortunately as massage therapists, you don't have to deal with these issues when you blog. Whether it's for your own practice or a company you work for, you have the luxury of setting your own deadlines and being creative. Things that most journalists can only daydream about. However, writing about topics relating to massage therapy—such as physiology, pain, exercise, movement—can still be challenging if you do not have previous writing experience or a remote interest in writing. If you really want to blog to help build up your practice, better inform your clients or patients, or simply because you like to write about research to satiate your curiosity, there are a few points to keep in mind when you read and write.

## 1. DON'T BORE YOUR AUDIENCE

If you read any news story, you are likely to see the same formula when journalists write. They start with an event (who, what, where, when, how) followed by "data" and facts from an expert or research paper (often in the form of a press release, not the original paper), and then conclude the story by tying it back to the original event.

Let's say if you write about the differences between acute low back pain and its chronic version and how massage therapists might go about addressing it, you could start with an anecdote about one of your clients (with their consent if you use their name) and how you communicated to them about how you would deliver the treatment. Then include a few research papers (with citations) that