

## 2022 Peter Stachnyk Merit Award **KATHERINE STYRCHAK** BA, RMT, CLT-LANA



Inspiring, dedicated, kind, and intrinsically generous, are a few of the words used by nominators and colleagues Susan Zwarch and Agnes Melanchuk, to describe Katherine Styrchak.

“Katherine represents the best ideals of our profession by constantly

striving for excellence in responsible, patient-centred care, continually developing best practices for managing lymphedema, promoting local and inter-professional global collaboration, and tirelessly advocating on behalf of her patients.” It was for these reasons that they nominated Katherine for the 2022 Peter Stachnyk Merit Award.

Katherine completed a Bachelor of Arts degree at Collège-universitaire de St-Boniface in 1993 and became a Registered Massage Therapist upon graduating from Wellington College of Remedial Massage Therapy Inc. in 1994. Since then she has completed additional training at the Dr. Vodder School and became a Lymphology Association of North America (LANA) certified lymphedema therapist.

As Susan states, “Katherine’s drive for excellence in providing patient-centred care with breast cancer-related lymphedema, is her motivation for continually upgrading her education through courses, webinars, and review of current and emerging research, which she readily shares with surgeons, specialists, colleagues, patients, and the lymphedema community.”

Katherine networks and communicates regularly with allied health professionals, continually reaches out to Manitoba lymphedema therapists to keep them connected and updated on the latest trends and techniques and willingly provides her time and knowledge to her Association. One example of her efforts is to better define the qualifications of Lymphedema therapists within MTAM’s membership, so that patients researching treatment will better understand which therapists are best suited for their specific needs.

“We have enormous respect for Katherine’s dedication to her place of employment (Shared Health Manitoba’s Breast Health Centre). During the COVID-19 pandemic (over the past 3 years), she has developed virtual management strategies, provided specific educational links, and observed patient outcomes virtually”, says Susan and Agnes.

Katherine has presented lymphedema education and the

role of the Breast Health Centre, at the Manitoba Cancer Care conferences and Lymphedema Awareness Day with the Lymphedema Association of Manitoba. She has also attended and presented at national and international conferences on lymphedema, including Montreal, Montpellier (France), and Darwin (Australia).

Handling and resolving very difficult situations with remarkable patience, empathy, and admirable compassion, Katherine has developed incredibly well-received exercise programs and post-operative guidelines at the Breast Health Centre. She sets aside time to investigate the latest research and clinical approaches, which she readily shares within the lymphedema community, therapists, medical professionals, and patients alike by developing webinars for educational purposes.

Katherine describes her professional goals as always “striving to provide current, up to date research to improve quality of life for patients with breast cancer-related lymphedema (BRCA-LE) by educating patients and HCPs. By providing Gold Standard treatment and information, patients can manage their chronic condition with confidence, not fear. Education in lymphedema self-management (Compression, exercise, self-manual lymphatic drainage and skin care) empowers the patient and provides them the tools to recognize changes in their lymphedema and seek appropriate treatment. Communication with the patient’s HCPs increases collaboration between professionals and provides better patient outcomes.”

Even though Katherine is highly dedicated to her field, she still maintains a work/life balance. In her personal time, she schedules time to train for biathlons, walks her dog twice a day, plans and enjoys family canoe trips, and makes time to cross country ski and/or run with her family on weekends.

Katherine’s compassion as a therapist, teacher, collaborator, networker, communicator, and mentor; active participation in community events; striving to understand emerging industry needs; dedication to researching and cultivating ideas to support our evolving profession; and her willingness to communicate her discoveries makes Katherine a natural choice for the 2022 Peter Stachnyk Merit Award.

The MTAM Board of Directors is pleased to present the 2022 Peter Stachnyk Merit Award to Katherine Styrchak for her dedication and contributions to the massage therapy profession and to MTAM.

Congratulations Katherine!