



The Canadian Massage Therapy Alliance (CMTA), through 11 professional Associations, represents the majority (15,000+) of massage therapists across the country. We encourage and support the efforts of all stakeholders to promote massage therapy as a respected and valued healthcare profession. This statement applies to both the regulated and unregulated jurisdictions across Canada.

Current as of September 8, 2018.

MASSAGE THERAPY STUDENTS WORKING BEFORE GRADUATION

The CMTA works to maintain and enhance the credibility of the massage therapy profession across Canada. We are working towards the federal government formally recognizing massage therapy as a valued member of the healthcare landscape across all of Canada.

MINIMUM STANDARD

It is the position of the CMTA that the profession of massage therapy and specifically the stakeholders including Associations, Regulators, and Schools of Massage Therapy should endorse and support the completion of a minimum education standard before engaging the public in the delivery of clinically indicated massage therapy.

That minimum education standard includes the completion and graduation of, at a minimum, a two-year/2200+hour massage therapy diploma or equivalent, passing any requisite examination as mandated in a province, and that satisfies the [2016 Inter-jurisdictional Practice Competencies and Performance Indicators for Massage Therapists at Entry-to-Practice](#).

PRACTICING UNSUPERVISED

Before beginning any type of unsupervised massage practice, the CMTA believes that a massage therapy student must have graduated successfully with this minimum standard from a legitimate and acceptable massage therapy education institution as determined through accreditation via the Canadian Massage Therapy Council for Accreditation or, until such time that this program is running fully across Canada, is acceptable by the standards set out by the CMTA itself or a CMTA organization in a particular geographic jurisdiction.

SUPERVISED PRACTICUM EXEMPT FROM THIS STATEMENT

Massage therapy students who are in a *supervised* practicum or mentorship receiving hands-on training with professional educators are not included within this statement. The definition of *supervised* means a consistent application of mentorship, training, and supervision by an experienced, professional massage therapist, throughout the delivery of a treatment and treatment plan.

“RELAXATION” MESSAGE

A key part of this statement is reconciling what is traditionally referred to by clinicians and non-clinicians as “relaxation massage,” as it is a base argument by some for allowing students to work unsupervised, under the premise that relaxation massage can be performed by anyone.



Some massage therapy professionals use the word “relaxation” from a marketing perspective to more-easily define to a patient a potential outcome. However, they still manage the treatment from the highest level of massage therapy skill. This “relaxation massage” would still include the components of a professional massage therapy appointment with an appropriate intake, assessment, treatment plan, informed consent, and remedial assignment.

Other stakeholders in the profession define and advertise “relaxation massage” as a non-healthcare massage with little or no training required.

Overall, if this “relaxation massage” is performed as a therapeutic intervention that will assist the patient to achieve their desired outcome, it requires the depth of knowledge provided by the minimum standard for massage therapy as described above.

If a member of the public is searching for an intervention that does not include the components of a professional massage therapy appointment, then it is likely more appropriate for them to pursue massage from a non-healthcare provider or someone not associated with the profession.

Massage therapy students are associated with the profession.

INTEGRITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF STUDENTS

The individual that decides to become a massage therapist has committed to the professional culture of massage therapy healthcare.

Integrity and accountability are fundamental to ensuring trust between the public and healthcare professionals. A professional massage therapist’s integrity forms a foundation for trust and fosters healthy therapeutic relationships that promote healing.

Students of massage therapy, from the first day of school, should respect the importance of this foundation and respect the standards of the profession.

SAFETY OF THE PATIENT

Across Canada we are aware of cases where massage therapy students end up with little or no guidance in a work situation and yet there is an expectation to perform competent, clinically indicated massage therapy.

This puts the patient at risk of unintended consequences; the CMTA stands by the belief that without a demonstrated achievement of the minimum standards there is an increased risk to the safety of the patient. Further, these actions put the student’s future at risk and can affect the reputation of a business as well.

STAKEHOLDERS HOLDING MASSAGE THERAPISTS TO STANDARDS

Insurance benefit providers and the companies that are their clients should expect that the healthcare standards of all providers should have a minimum standard of education and the ability to ensure an entry to practice level of competency. All providers should provide care that is at the practice standard



and health benefit expected by the patients who are using those benefits. Insurers who approve treatments provided by individuals not fully qualified as massage therapy professionals inadvertently expose the public to undue risk and undermine the credibility of their stated intention to provide access to benefits associated with licensed health care professionals.

CONCLUSION

Massage therapy is a health profession, and we share the common belief that we are primarily concerned with putting the patient's interests above our own by providing clinically indicated services for the express purpose of enhancing and improving the lives and health of our patients. The culture of massage therapy is defined by the professionalism of its practitioners. They cannot be separated.

Students working unsupervised, performing massage of any kind before minimum qualifications are achieved, sends a signal to all stakeholders that the profession is willing to compromise the high standards and ethical considerations we, as a profession, have worked so hard to achieve.

References

- 1) **Code of Ethics. Retrieved May 08, 2017, <http://www.CMTBC.com>, <http://www.cmta.com/>, <http://www.saskmassagetherapy.com/?page=17>, <http://cmtnb.ca/code-of-ethics/>, [http://www.mtam.mb.ca/admin/uploads/files/MTAM%20Code%20of%20Ethics%202017\(1\).pdf](http://www.mtam.mb.ca/admin/uploads/files/MTAM%20Code%20of%20Ethics%202017(1).pdf).**
- 2) **Charter-on-Professionalism.pdf. (2006, September 08). Retrieved May 08, 2017, from <http://www.cmta.com/>**
- 3) **About-the-profession/standards-of-practice/. (2006, January). Retrieved May 08, 2017, from <http://www.cmta.com/>, <http://www.CMTBC.com>, <http://www.saskmassagetherapy.com>, <http://MTAM.mb.ca>, <http://peimta.com>**
- 4) **Standards of Practice 2016, [http://www.crmta.ca/doc/National%20Standards%20of%20Practice%20APPROVED\(1\).pdf](http://www.crmta.ca/doc/National%20Standards%20of%20Practice%20APPROVED(1).pdf)**

For more information

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