

POSITION STATEMENT PROPOSAL: MASSAGE THERAPY CAN PROVIDE SIGNIFICANT BENEFIT AS A COMPONENT OF INTEGRATIVE HEALTH CARE

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

According to the World Health Organization, health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.⁽¹⁾ Currently health care in the United States is going through a paradigm shift from a biomedical model to a biopsychosocial model. The biopsychosocial model places emphasis on viewing the patient as a whole and addressing all the patient's needs by inter-professional health care teams which include both health and mental health, in a non-stigmatizing environment which considers the patient's preferences and culture.⁽²⁾

Integrative care is at the core of this paradigm shift to the biopsychosocial model. "Integrative medicine is the practice of medicine that reaffirms the importance of the relationship between practitioner and patient, focuses on the whole person, is informed by evidence, and

19 makes use of all appropriate therapeutic and lifestyle approaches, health care professionals and
20 disciplines to achieve optimal health and healing.”⁽³⁾

21

22 A growing body of evidence supports the value massage therapy can offer to integrated
23 health systems for a range of patient health conditions. Massage therapy has been shown to be
24 effective in regards to chronic pain, behavioral health, rehabilitation, and acute medical
25 treatment.⁽⁴⁻¹¹⁾

26

27 Massage therapy is well accepted for managing pain. Dr. Albert Schweitzer is said to
28 have proclaimed in 1931 that pain is a more terrible lord of mankind than even death itself.
29 Chronic pain has become an epidemic affecting nearly 50 million American adults.⁽¹²⁾ “Pain is a
30 leading cause of disability and a major contributor to health care utilization. It is also costly to
31 the United States, not just in terms of health care expenses and disability compensation, but also
32 with respect to lost productivity and employment, reduced incomes, lost school days, and
33 decreased quality of life.”⁽¹³⁾ “Effective pain management thus requires therapies that treat both
34 pain and related sequela by addressing the whole patient through a holistic biopsychosocial
35 model.”⁽¹⁴⁾ A recent meta-analysis gave massage therapy a strong recommendation, compared to
36 no treatment, for reducing pain intensity/severity for those with musculoskeletal pain.⁽¹⁴⁾ Several
37 treatment guidelines indicate massage therapy for treatment of low back pain^(6,9,10,15-17), neck
38 pain⁽¹⁸⁾, and migraines.⁽¹⁹⁾ Massage therapy has also been shown to be beneficial⁽⁴⁾ for low back
39 pain^(9,10,17,20-28), headaches⁽²⁹⁻⁴²⁾, carpal tunnel syndrome⁽⁴³⁻⁴⁸⁾, osteoarthritis⁽⁴⁹⁻⁵²⁾, neck and
40 shoulder pain⁽⁵³⁻⁵⁵⁾, fibromyalgia⁽⁵⁶⁻⁶⁴⁾, and in hospice care⁽⁶⁵⁻⁷⁴⁾.

41

42 One key aspect of integrated, *patient-centered* care is assisting patients to participate in
43 managing both their physical and mental health care needs. Incorporating massage therapy as
44 part of a treatment plan enables treatment of not only the physical and behavioral aspects of a
45 wide variety of health conditions, but also the myriad of symptoms that accompany these
46 conditions. “In 2014, there were an estimated 43.6 million adults aged 18 or older in the United
47 States with AMI {any mental illness} in the past year.”⁽⁷⁵⁾ Massage therapy research has been
48 shown to be beneficial⁽⁴⁾ for anxiety and stress^(25-27,29,35,38,64,76-94),
49 depression^(26,27,35,58,64,70,79,89,91,95-104), PTSD^(23,105-108), and Substance Abuse Disorder
50 Recovery.^(11,81,109)

51

52 As part of an integrative treatment plan, massage therapy can aid in the healing and
53 rehabilitation following bodily injury. The Department of Labor recognized the potential benefit
54 of massage therapy for injured employees under the Energy Employees Occupational Illness
55 Compensation Program Act (EEOICPA), which provides compensation to those who work on
56 certain high-risk projects for the Department of Energy. The Department cited the potential
57 benefits of massage therapy as “reducing pain and muscle tension, increasing flexibility and
58 range of motion, and improving blood circulation.”⁽¹¹⁰⁾ Massage therapy has been shown to be
59 beneficial⁽⁴⁾ in working with athletic training/injury treatment⁽¹¹¹⁻¹¹⁹⁾, ergonomics and job-related

60 injuries^(43–46,48,120), cardiac rehabilitation^(84,121,122), joint replacement rehabilitation^(123–125), and
61 scar management.^(126–135)

62

63 Massage therapy can help make the healing process more successful by addressing not
64 only the symptoms of medical conditions but also the treatments for those conditions which can
65 have effects that significantly impair quality of life, sometimes generating pain, anxiety, and
66 depression. Massage therapy for inpatient conditions in hospitals demonstrates how massage
67 therapy can apply to a wide range of health issues. Massage therapy has been shown to be
68 beneficial^(4,11) for cancer management^(60,136–150), post-surgical pain management^(14,84,90,151–164),
69 lymphatic drainage^(165–170), maternity and newborn care.^(171–181)

70

71 **RATIONALE:**

72 Massage therapy is one of the oldest health care practices known in history. Chinese
73 medical texts more than 4,000 years old reference massage. Hippocrates, the “Father of
74 Medicine” said, “Anyone wishing to study medicine must master the art of massage.” Evidence-
75 informed massage therapy can be dated back to the days of Per Henrik Ling with its introduction
76 to the United States in 1850 by physicians, George and Charles Taylor. The first massage clinics
77 in the US were opened by two physicians, Dr. Baron Nils Posse and Dr. Hartvig Nissen. Today,
78 massage therapists are considered health care professionals in most states that license the
79 profession. Several treatment guidelines have been created recommending massage therapy as a
80 standard treatment approach.^(9–11,15–19,110,135,137)

81

82 According to AMTA’s 2017 Consumer Survey 78 percent of individuals surveyed claim
83 their primary reason for receiving a massage in the previous 12 months was medical (50 percent)
84 or stress (28 percent) related. Medical reasons include pain relief, soreness, stiffness or spasms,
85 injury recovery, migraines, prevention, pregnancy or pre-natal, and general well-being. Eighty-
86 eight percent of individuals view massage as being beneficial to overall health and wellness
87 while 89 percent of consumers surveyed believe that massage can be effective in reducing pain;
88 with 28 percent of respondents stating they have used massage therapy for pain relief.
89 Additionally, 71 percent of consumers agree that massage therapy should be considered a form
90 of health care.⁽¹⁸²⁾

91

92 “Hospitals around the country are embracing the value of massage therapy.”⁽¹⁸³⁾ The
93 Mayo Clinic’s website states, “massage can be a powerful tool to help you take charge of your
94 health and well-being, whether you have a specific health condition or are just looking for
95 another stress reliever.”⁽¹⁸⁴⁾ The Nationwide Children’s Hospital offers massage therapy services
96 to any of their patients.⁽¹⁸⁵⁾ Several hospitals across the country offer oncology massage.⁽¹⁸⁶⁾

97 Richard Lee, MD, a physician at MD Anderson Cancer Center states, “massage performed with
98 this appropriate knowledge and training can be safely done to help cancer patients.”⁽¹⁸⁷⁾
99 According to studies conducted for the American Hospital Association, massage therapy is the
100 top complementary therapy offered in outpatient settings and the second highest complementary
101 therapy offered in inpatient settings.⁽¹⁸⁸⁾ The use of massage therapy as an outpatient service
102 increased from 54 percent of hospitals in 2007 to 64 percent of hospitals in 2010.

103

104 In addition to the direct therapy benefits for certain medical conditions, as supported by
105 the growing body of research, massage therapy can help patients achieve better outcomes as part
106 of integrated care. Massage therapists have not only been working in hospitals, but also in
107 primary care settings and on a referral basis with other health care providers. The treatment plans
108 of HIV/AIDS, fibromyalgia, cancer, and other debilitating illnesses already integrate massage
109 therapy as part of the care package. Massage therapy, while not a substitute for medical
110 procedures, can work effectively alongside conventional medicine either to directly address the
111 ailments or to address some of the pain and anxiety that can result from certain medical
112 procedures.⁽⁴⁾

113

114 This statement is in line with AMTA’s Standards of Practice:

- 115 • provide safe, consistent care
- 116 • determine the quality of care provided
- 117 • 1.4 The Practitioner seeks professional supervision/consultation consistent with
118 promoting and maintaining appropriate application of skills and knowledge.
- 119 • 2.2 Pathophysiology (Contraindications)
- 120 • 2.2.1 The Practitioner maintains current knowledge and skills of pathophysiology and the
121 appropriate application of massage/bodywork.

122

123 This statement fully supports AMTA’s mission statement:

- 124 • To serve AMTA members while advancing the art, science and practice of massage
125 therapy.

126

127 This statement fully supports all of AMTA’s core values:

- 128 • We are a diverse and nurturing community working with integrity, respect and dignity.
- 129 • We are a nonprofit member-driven organization of ethical professionals.
- 130 • We endorse professional standards.
- 131 • We believe in the benefits of massage.

132

133 The position statement supports the portions of Vision Statements of the AMTA, as follows:

- 134 • AMTA members are devoted to professionalism and excellence in massage therapy
135 practice.

- 136 • Quality research is the foundation for evidence-informed massage therapy education and
137 practice.
- 138 • AMTA promotes its members as the highest quality professionals in massage therapy.
- 139 • Massage therapy is easily accessible.
- 140 • Massage therapy is a vital component of health care and wellness.

141
142 The position statement supports the portions of Goals and Objectives of the AMTA, as follows:

143
144 **ADVOCACY AND INFLUENCE**
145 Goal: The health care and wellness industry accepts the value of massage therapy.
146 Objective: Increase understanding of the benefits of massage therapy through education of the
147 health care and wellness industry.

148
149 **INDUSTRY RELATIONSHIPS**
150 Goal: AMTA is a respected leader within the health care and wellness industry.
151 Objective: Increase collaboration between AMTA, its members and other health care and
152 wellness industry leaders.

153
154 **RESEARCH**
155 Goal: AMTA members are aware of the importance of scientific research to the massage therapy
156 industry.
157 Objective: Increase the opportunities for members to access massage therapy scientific research
158 through AMTA sources.

159
160 **POSITION STATEMENT:**
161
162 It is the position of the American Massage Therapy Association (AMTA) that massage therapy
163 can provide significant benefit as a component of Integrative Health Care.

164
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