

Registered Massage Therapists'
Association of Ontario

ANNUAL REPORT 2021

RMTAO Annual Report 2021

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From the RMTAO

Message from the Board Chair



I wonder if we are ever going to look back on 2021 without layering the impact of COVID upon it. I suspect that even many years into the future there will always be a slight mental asterisk on these last few years and a recognition that they weren't 'normal'. Perhaps no year is normal, but I made a deal with myself at the start of this year that I would do whatever I could to not let COVID overpower the 'normal' things in my life, while staying within the law, of course! Time will tell how successful I've been at that, but the intention was born of a desire not to let COVID win too many battles in my life, including in the role of Chair of the RMTAO Board of Directors.

For a variety of reasons we started the year with a relatively inexperienced Board of Directors that was also smaller in number than usual for the RMTAO. Add to that the very annoying reality that COVID has prevented us from gathering in person, and it's fair to say that we started the year looking down the barrel at a steep learning curve with some hands tied behind our backs (who doesn't love a good mixed metaphor or three?) So, I'm pleased to report that I think your Board of Directors has done a tremendous job of getting on with its role of providing direction and guidance for the Association.

The fact that I'm still waiting for the opportunity to meet two of my fellow directors, Erika Kuehnel and Chris Semenuk, in person is in no way reflected in the quality of the work we have achieved together this year. The same goes for Secretary Alex Kidd and Director Mary Tzianan who I've only managed to physically meet once. I've had the good fortune to interact with Vice Chair Susan Bessonette in many ways over the years and it has been wonderful to continue our working relationship via the Board.

One of the necessary but decidedly unglamorous aspects of board work is serving on committees. With a smaller than usual Board of Directors this year we took the step of inviting members of the Association to join committees as Members at Large to add their perspective and viewpoints without them needing to make as large a time commitment as is required by a full director. I'd like to thank Dylan Crake, Dani Faucher, Sasha Goudriaan, Kristofer Lam, Amber Parkinson, and Jason Verbruggen for their contributions this year.

Another initiative this year has been an increase in the transparency of the Board elections to give all members a clearer picture of how members end up on the Board. It's nothing groundbreaking, but rather brings us in line with how society expects elections to unfold by releasing full election results, and in a more timely manner than we have in the past.

Executive Director Michael Feraday and I have attended a series of virtual meetings with representatives of other associations from across Canada as part of the Canadian Massage Therapist Alliance (CMTA). Michael is chairing a committee with the CMTA to continue to move the HST exemption project forwards. We continue to build our strong case to the federal government that massage therapy should become tax exempt so that there is greater access to care for our patients and so that we are treated equally to other health professionals.

Other projects that the Board has been working on or contributing to this year include a statement on Telemedicine, a survey on the treatment of spouses, a toolkit for RMTs selected for Peer Assessment and a refresh on the Association's Community Based Networks. Some of these projects will continue into

the new year, and I look forward to being able to provide our members with updates on these initiatives.

But as you know, probably the biggest news story in massage therapy this year has had nothing directly to do with the Board. I'm referring to the fact that RMTs have continued in practice all year without being derailed by COVID. It is nothing short of astounding that in a profession which primarily requires us to be hands-on, in-person and breathing the same air as our clients we have not only worked but that the profession has thrived. I salute all RMTs for taking all the simple but often tedious steps necessary to continue to provide quality care to clients. It is quite simply the inspiration that drives the Board to continue to do everything we can to support you, the members of the Association. Thank you for everything you're all continuing to do to keep our profession moving forward and growing stronger during these far from normal times.

Ian Kamm, BSc, RMT
Chair of the Board of Directors

From the RMTAO

Message from the Executive Director



For the past two years, the pandemic has dominated most aspects of our lives. Thankfully, we seem to be emerging from the worst of the pandemic and have experienced a return to some sense of normalcy. For

the Association, this has been an opportunity to reinforce the value of what the Association can do for members and what the profession can do for Ontarians—an opportunity for renewal.

Over the last two years, we've maintained a dedicated membership base, despite the fact that there have been very few new graduates in each of the last 2 years. We have made a financial surplus in each of the last two years, restoring the financial strength of the Association.

Most importantly, RMTs have been acknowledged as an essential service by the Ministry of Health, which has meant that RMTs have been able to practice throughout all but two months at the beginning of the pandemic in 2020. This, as much as anything, has reinforced the standing of the profession in the eyes of the public and other stakeholders. There is a huge demand for RMTs right now and my feeling is that this will continue as the services that RMTs provide become more important in a post-pandemic world.

The RMTAO has been very active in advocating for its members and the profession. We have also been able to move forward on many initiatives shared throughout this Annual Report.

In addition to an extensive amount of advocacy directed at the provincial government, the Association has worked hard on behalf of student members to assist them in their

challenges with Prometric, the organization that now manages the entry-to-practice exams. We have made inroads in our relationships with the large insurance companies to help members resolve issues more quickly. We have worked closely with our provincial colleagues at the Canadian Massage Therapist Alliance (CMTA) to relaunch the HST/GST exemption campaign. We have built closer relationships with the College of Massage Therapists of Ontario (CMTO) and other Association groups to ensure we are at the table for important discussions and to take advantage of opportunities as they present themselves. We are working with the Ontario Ministry of Health to ensure massage therapy plays an important role in integrated healthcare and the healthcare reform agenda. We also work directly with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) and the federal government to improve access to massage therapy and provide advice. In addition, we assist many members with their individual requests for assistance every day.

The advocacy goals for the RMTAO in the coming year relate to three main areas: government, inter-professional collaboration and the insurance industry.

Government - To engage with the government to promote the importance of massage therapy for the health and well-being of Canadians and push for the general interests of RMTs in Ontario.

Inter-professional Collaboration – To connect with other healthcare professions to position massage therapy as a strong complement to other healthcare professions and become part of the circle of care of patients.

Insurance industry – To engage with insurance companies to educate them on importance of massage therapy for health and wellness of Canadians and uphold the interests of RMTs. We also have goals to increase the educational opportunities for our members, increase the body of research for massage therapy, and continue to communicate consistently and effectively about the benefits of massage therapy and the benefits of RMTAO membership.

To achieve our potential as a profession we need to work together, work hard, and work collectively. It will take consistent messaging and pressure to bring about change and it will take time. However, we grow stronger all the time because we are an important part of the solution.

The RMTAO Board has played and vital role in helping the Association in all of our goals. I would like to thank Ian Kamm and the rest of the Board for their assistance and for being an important source of knowledge and expertise for me to tap into.

It is important to continue to support and belong to your Association. Your Association is the group that will advocate for you and make your voice heard. We need to bring our voices together because Canadians need us; the health system needs us.

Michael Feraday, MBA
Executive Director and CEO

RMTAO Staff

Michael Feraday, MBA
Executive Director and CEO

Jill Haig, BSc (Hons), CAE
Director of Operations

Laura Fixman, BAA (Hons)
Manager of Communications

Hariti Malhotra, BA (Hons)
Education and Events Planner

Angela Paton
Member Services Coordinator

Eman Abubakar, BA (Hons)
Administrative Coordinator

Board of Directors

Ian Kamm, BSc, RMT
Chair

Susan Bessonette, BA, RMT
Vice-Chair

Alex Kidd, BKin, RMT
Secretary

Mary Tzianias, RMT, RRPr
Director

Dr. Erika Kuehnel, DC, RMT, CMAG
Director

Chris Semenuk, RMT
Director

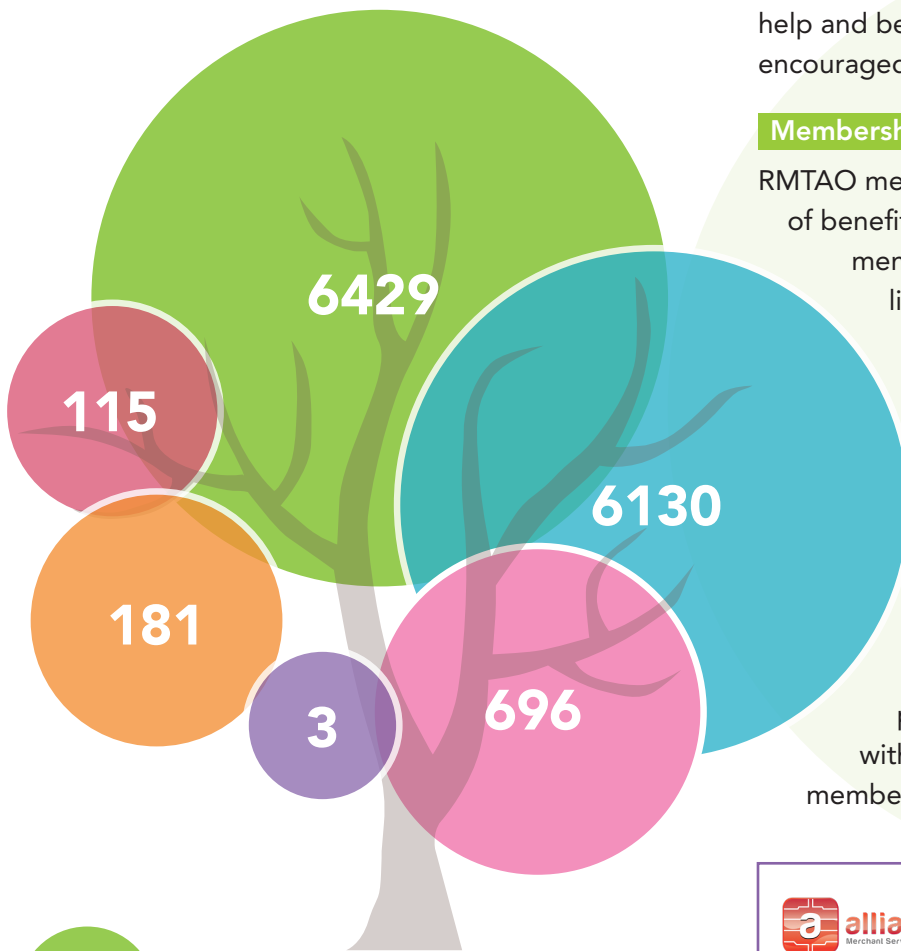
RMTAO Membership

Membership Numbers

As we gradually began to emerge from the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021 we saw many new members as RMTs continued to realize the value that RMTAO membership brought to their professional careers. In the summer of 2021 we welcomed new graduates to the profession and the association for the first time since before the pandemic began. We were also able to welcome back some members who had

returned to the association after some time away. While our membership numbers are slightly less than last year, in part due to the reduced number of RMTs in the profession and a lack of new RMTs due to delays in examinations, we continue to offer increasing value to our members by continuing to focus on their interests, desires and what they need to succeed.

With less focus required on the direct impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on our members, we were able to focus on other priorities that directly help and benefit our members, which is what encouraged members to join or renew this year.



Membership Programs

RMTAO members have access to a variety of benefits and programs as part of their membership including a free RMTFind listing, a subscription to our magazine *Massage Therapy Today*, continuing education opportunities and access to various resources and discounted programs. Members can still choose to pay for the programs and services that work best for them with our flex membership model.

We would like to thank all of our programs partners who work closely with us to continue to provide our members with discounted valuable benefits.

TOTAL Number of RMT Members

- Active Members
- Associate Members
- Retired Members
- Life Members
- Student Members



Membership Survey Results

We surveyed our members in March 2021 to ensure the RMTAO had a clear picture of what was important to members to guide our focus throughout the year. A total of 619 members responded to the survey. We made a summary of the results available to members at the conclusion of the survey.

Most members were either satisfied or very satisfied with their membership. Members indicated that they would like to see more updates on advocacy efforts, more practical resources they can use right away in their practice and more support to connect with their peers. These are all areas we have worked on throughout 2021 which will be outlined in the rest of this report.

RMTAO Education

Education Conference



The RMTAO had our first ever fully virtual education conference on June 13-14, 2021 focusing on self-care and rehabilitation from a biopsychosocial perspective. This conference included engaging keynotes, a panel on trauma-informed care and exciting session topics including but not limited to managing burnout and making self-care manageable.

Attendees also had the opportunity to enjoy our virtual trade show and connect with each other at our virtual networking tables. 195 people signed up to attend the conference and the feedback was overall very positive.

The conference was well-received with the majority of the participants satisfied with the delivery of education sessions through an online platform. The virtual format provided a lot of flexibility and ease for the participants to attend sessions without having to travel while also providing the opportunity to re-watch the recordings of the sessions for up to a month after the conference end date.

Webinars

The RMTAO offered a variety of webinars in 2021 that were very popular with members. Topics included chronic pain and massage therapy, sexual harassment in the treatment room, managing post-concussion patients, business strategizing and planning, and more!

We have received great feedback from our members that have attended the webinars. While some members have expressed their preference to attend in-person courses, most have found e-learning to be a better approach to continuing education due to the flexibility it provides with their schedules.

We are planning a variety of new webinars for 2022, which will focus on business topics, massage therapy techniques, patient populations, and other important skills for RMTs.

Total Webinars Offered
18

Total Webinar Attendees
996



2 Keynote Speakers

Speakers **12**

195 Attendees

Attendee Satisfaction **95%**

RMTAO Communications



Resources



The RMTAO was able to launch our Resource Centre in 2021, which includes a variety of practical resources that members can use right away in practice. The Resource Centre is divided into a variety of helpful categories based on the topic, type and category of the resources.

We added a number of new helpful resources in 2021 including:

- **New Grad Toolkit.** Ensures that new RMTs have the information they need to be successful when they begin practice.
- **Tips for Communicating Effectively with Patients.** Gives RMTs advice on how to make their communication with their patients more effective and efficient.
- **Beginner's Guide to Massage Therapy Research.** Provides information on how to find and understand relevant research, and use that research in massage therapy practice.
- **Common Practice Concerns.** A list of common practice concerns we encounter at the RMTAO office and a summary of how to address them.

Blog Posts

We continue to add blog posts throughout 2021 on various benefits of massage therapy as well as topics that are important to RMTs. These posts are meant to be easily sharable by our members on their social media channels to further spread the word to their audiences.

Topics in 2021 have included further information about HST exemption, massage therapy for shoulder pain, massage therapy myths and facts, massage therapy for foot and ankle pain, gardening without pain and more.

Massage Therapy Today



The RMTAO released four issues of *Massage Therapy Today* in 2021. The themes of these issues were Work-Related Injuries, Trauma-Informed Care, Building a Successful Practice and Beyond Hands-On Treatments. The Winter, Spring and Fall issues were sent to all RMTAO members. The Summer issue was sent to all RMTs across Ontario, with content encouraging members to join the RMTAO.

The Friday File

The Friday File e-newsletter continues to be sent weekly to our members and partners

for updates on Association activities, highlights of practical resources and news that affects the massage therapy profession, and remains a trusted source of information for RMTAO members.

One popular new section in The Friday File is an Advocacy Update from our Executive Director and CEO Michael Feraday so that members can keep up-to-date with the advocacy efforts of the Association.

the Friday File

Massage Therapy Awareness Week

—October 24 – 30, 2021—

MASSAGE THERAPY AWARENESS WEEK



During Massage Therapy Awareness Week in 2021 we focused on highlighting the diverse ways that massage therapy can help patients. We did this by sharing stories from patients across Ontario who have benefitted from

message therapy, from helping a wheelchair user feel more comfortable with movement, to helping and industrial climber stay pain-free at work, to helping relieve the physical symptoms of anxiety.

In advance of Massage Therapy Awareness Week we also shared a guide to help members celebrate massage therapy awareness week in their practice. We would like to thank all the members that shared this content with their networks to spread the word about how massage therapy can help.

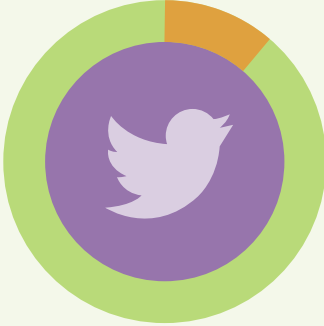




Social Media

The RMTAO began an Instagram account in late 2020 and have gained over 1100 followers in the past year as well as had consistently high engagement with posts. Our Instagram posts primarily focus on the diverse benefits of massage therapy as well as events and volunteer opportunities for RMTAO members. We also continue to post engaging content on our

Facebook page and maintain an active Twitter account, both of which focus on the benefits of massage therapy as well as news that impacts the massage therapy profession, and a spotlight on RMTAO events and member benefits. Our overall social media reach and engagement continues to grow and we continue to focus on posts that members can share with their networks.



Total Twitter Impressions: 148,403
(Number of times tweets have been seen)

Total Twitter Followers: 2,058

Total Facebook Page Reach: 110,737

Total Facebook Page Likes: 6,351



Total Instagram Reach: 4,417

Total Instagram Followers: 1,195

Opiod and Pain Reduction Collaborative

The RMTAO is collaborating with the Ontario Chiropractic Association (OCA) to develop resources and education to help both RMTs and Chiropractors to collaborate with physicians or prescribing practitioners in order to more effectively treat mutual patients who use opioids for pain management.



The first step in this process was to create a communications guideline to help RMTs to communicate with their patients when their patients would like to discuss their opioid use, as well as to communicate effectively with those patients' physicians or prescribing practitioners. This tool was reviewed by the CMTO to ensure that RMTs could use it while remaining within their scope of practice, and shared with members.

We also worked with the OCA to develop forms to help with the assessment and treatment planning of low back pain, shoulder pain and neck pain and to aid in collaboration with doctors and other primary-care practitioners.

There have also been joint education sessions developed with the OCA so that both chiropractors and RMTs could develop more confidence in this topic.



RMTAO Connection and Recognition



Community-Based Networks

Our active Community-Based Networks have continued to meet regularly throughout 2021, primarily virtually though some in-person meetings have started to return. In a time where opportunities to connect

were still limited, CBNs gave RMTs the opportunity to connect with their peers virtually to discuss important issues affecting their practice such as new standards of practice, STRiVE requirements, self-care recommendations and more!

In 2021, the RMTAO developed several ways to help our volunteer CBN coordinators, based on the results of a survey of CBN coordinators. This includes a monthly CBN newsletter containing highlights of RMTAO resources available, meeting topic suggestions, helpful articles and a summary of advocacy efforts at the RMTAO. We also provided templates of agendas for meetings on various topics, and access to a paid Zoom account to facilitate virtual

meetings. Finally, we created CBN Coordinator Guidelines so coordinators know and understand what is expected of them.

School Ambassador Program

We have continued to regularly contact massage therapy schools to ensure they have the opportunity to schedule visits from school ambassadors to discuss the benefits of student RMTAO membership and the current activities of the RMTAO.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we still arranged virtual school visits in 2021 which was also able to reach more students as all campuses of an individual school were invited to the same virtual meeting. We continue to receive regular feedback from schools about the value of these visits, and will begin to transition these visits in-person once appropriate.



RMTAO Awards

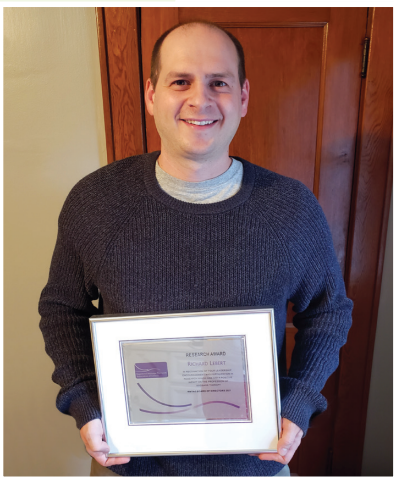


Our annual awards ceremony was once again virtual this year, and we were pleased to take our volunteers and awards winners on a virtual trip around the world through our travel themed event. We all boarded RMTAO Air, and went for a trip around the world while we honoured our award winners. We toured the great pyramids in Egypt, saw the northern lights in Iceland, and swam on the great barrier reef in Australia.



Thank you to everyone who helped make our virtual event a success.

Congratulations to our 2021 RMTAO Award Winners!



Darren Nixon
RMT of the Year
In Remembrance
of Ken Rezsnyak

Brandy John
Professional
Service Award

Richard Lebert
Research Award

RMTAO Advocacy



Overview

- Continued participation with the Coalition of Ontario Regulated Health Professional Associations (CORHPA), to advocate for support to help businesses survive the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as more ongoing concerns such as issues with the insurance industry.
- Responding to the Premier and other government officials regarding information shared in the media regarding massage therapy.
- Continued involvement in the Coalition of Health Professional Associations in Ontario Automobile Insurance Services (the "Coalition") to advocate for issues of mutual concern including inadequacy of fees, audits, delisting and shadow regulation, and insurers entering into the business of healthcare delivery.
- Helped recent massage therapy graduates navigate issues with their entry-to-practice exams including delays in results and last-minute changes and cancellations, by regularly meeting and communicating with Prometric, the organization that runs the exams.
- Met regularly with representatives from Ontario public and private massage therapy schools to help them tackle issues that impact massage therapy education as well

as gain an understanding of the new Standards of Practice and other CMTO changes.

- Participated in the WSIB Healthcare Forum and encouraged members to provide their feedback as well to help highlight the challenges of working with WSIB.



- Sent patient stories to the Ministry of Health, all MPPs, media, and other leaders in healthcare to better integrate massage therapy into the emerging vision of health care in Ontario, which embraces a team-based, wellness approach.
- Met regularly with insurance industry executives to advocate for increased transparency in insurance company practices including delisting.
- Stayed in close touch with the CMTO and Ministry of Health to ensure we could keep members up-to-date with any changes to COVID protocols.

- Connected members with the Federal Ministry of Health to provide their feedback on their experiences in working in long-term care to guide the direction of long-term care in Canada.

Tax Exemption

- Our Executive Director Michael Feraday was appointed the Chair of the Canadian Massage Therapist Alliance (CMTA) Committee managing the HST/GST exemption initiative in 2021. Since obtaining tax exemption for massage therapists is a federal issue, this must be accomplished through the CMTA.
- Although the government is still heavily focused on the COVID-19 pandemic, they are now willing to consider other issues. We have re-started our communications campaign to ensure that RMTs understand the process of tax exemption, the impacts it would have on patients and RMTs, and are in support of the process. We also focused on ensuring that RMTs are aware that tax exemption is ultimately to make massage therapy care more accessible to patients and further level the playing field with RMTs and other health professionals.
- This involved including all of the tax exemption information on the CMTA website, informative blog posts, as well as inclusion of information in the RMTAO Friday File, with other associations distributing the information to their members through their own channels.
- Throughout 2022 the CMTA looks forward to stepping up our direct advocacy on this issue and we will still count on the support from RMTs to demonstrate that Canadian RMTs are united behind this request.



Registered Massage Therapists
Association of Ontario



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