

MARKETING TOOLKIT

This toolkit was designed to offer Registered Massage Therapists (RMTs) some guidance about the most effective ways to market your practice. This toolkit reviews best practices for potential communications channels, regulations RMTs need to follow, a collection of materials already available from the RMTAO, and sample content you can use to promote the massage therapy profession, and attract and retain new patients.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Communication Channels.....	2
Emails	2
Online Content	3
Social Media	3
Print Materials.....	4
Content Creation Dos and Don'ts.....	5
Laws and Regulations.....	6
CASL.....	6
CMTO	7
Patient Privacy	7
RMTAO Tools Available	7
Sample Content	8
Email.....	8
Blog.....	8

COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

There are various channels you can use to reach your patients or potential patients to promote your practice. Below we have provided an overview of a few of them, along with the pros, cons and things to consider while using them.

EMAIL

Sending emails to your patients is a great way to reach a lot of patients at once to share information about changes in your practice, modalities you perform, populations you focus on or information about massage therapy you want to share. When a patient books an appointment or receives a treatment, you can send them email reminders about their treatments, but when sending emails meant to market your practice, you need to make sure you are getting your patients' specific consent to receive those. This consent can be obtained during the initial appointment booking or during your regular intake process, and will be discussed in more detail in the Laws and Regulations section.

PROS

They're relatively quick and cost effective.

You can easily reach all of your patients at once, and especially compared to print marketing campaigns has minimal associated costs.

It quickly increases awareness of your practice.

People won't rebook if they're not thinking about you or about massage therapy in general.

Build your reputation and create a conversation.

By sharing high quality-information with your patients, you are establishing yourself as highly competent and skilled.

Can be more personalized.

It's easy to include the name of your intended recipient in your email, as well as creating specific emails for specific types of audiences, which can make it feel like a more personal communication.

CONS

Can get lost to the spam filter.

Many emails never get to the intended recipient and get caught in their spam filter, particularly if they are sent very frequently, or are not frequently opened.

Difficulty staying relevant.

It can be difficult sending information that's relevant and interesting to a large group of people. Everyone wants information that is tailored specifically to them. One way to combat this is to send different emails to different segments of patients, e.g. new patients vs. long-term patients.

Unlikely to be opened.

A marketing email that is considered extremely successful will still only have a 30% open rate. That means even for the best emails, about 70% of your audience is unlikely to open it.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Consider what actions you'd like your patient to take. Would you like them to rebook an appointment? Refer their friends to your practice? Ensure that message is clear.
- Limit the number of emails you send. Many of the cons mentioned above are more likely when you send too many emails. Save emails for crucial information or special occasions.
- Think about your audience. What would they be interested in? The most effective emails are created with a specific audience in mind.

ONLINE CONTENT

The first impression many patients will have of your practice is your website. Their decision to book an appointment with you might depend on how easy your website is to navigate and the content they can find there.

PROS

Reach your target audience.

You can reach your target market immediately, and can reach a very wide audience.

Very easily trackable.

By using tools like Google Analytics, you can track how many people are visiting your site, when they're visiting, and information about their demographics. You can then adjust your content accordingly.

Relationship building.

Having a strong website helps you build relationships with patients and potential patients, and it's something they can access at their convenience based on their interests.

CONS

Might not be taken seriously.

If not done professionally, you risk not being taken seriously. Your website is many patients' first impression of you, so you want to make sure you're presenting a professional image.

Hard to stand out.

Getting someone to find your website can be half the battle. If many other clinics within a few kilometers have similar or better websites, it can be hard to make an impression.

Might not be the best choice for your audience.

If most of your patients are over 70, or part of some other group that is less likely to search online for a health professional, it might not be best to focus on online marketing.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Make sure your website is mobile-friendly. The number of people who are consistently accessing the internet on their mobile device is significant and rapidly increasing.
- As with any type of communication, consider your audience. If you see a lot of pregnant patients, or a lot of your patients are athletes, you may want to tailor your content to what those populations are most interested in.
- Keep it short and sweet. On average people spend about two minutes on a website, and are less likely to look at large blocks of text. Keep the most important information at the top.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Many of your patients are likely on social media, and many businesses use social media to promote themselves and what they offer. Whether you use Facebook, Twitter, or any other platform, social media can be a great tool to market your practice. The RMTAO Social Media Toolkit provides you advice on using social media effectively for your practice, but it's important to review the pros and cons before deciding if you want to use social media at all, and how much work you want to put into it.

PROS

Relationship building.

Social media is a way to build and maintain a relationship with your patients and potential patients, so that they keep you in mind the next time they need massage therapy treatment.

Your potential patients are already there.

Especially with a well-established platform like Facebook, it attracts people of all ages and in all demographics. The fastest growing group on Facebook is over 55, so it's a great way to reach people at all ages and stages.

Increases word of mouth.

If your social media posts are shared widely and discussed online, it increases the word of mouth about your practice and it makes it easier for your current patients to refer you to their friends.

Learn more about your audience. Based on who looks at and interacts with your posts, and based on what sorts of comments you receive, you can get great insights into what your audience is interested in, and what types of posts they will interact with.

CONS

Can be time consuming.

For social media to be effective you need to post quality content regularly. You also need to treat it as a conversation, and part of your role on social media would be responding to any comments. This can take a lot of time.

Less control.

It's impossible to control how people react to you on any platform, but with social media any negative comments or complaints are more public for anyone to see. However, reacting professionally to these types of comments will increase the positive perception of you.

High competition and slow reward.

As previously mentioned, everyone is on social media now. That means it can be harder for your content to stand out. It also takes a while to develop a dedicated following on social media and see it translate to increased business. It's still a worthwhile long-term strategy if you take the time to do it right.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Using social media professionally is very different than using it personally. Make sure you're using professional language and not sharing personal health information.
- In addition to sharing your own content, you should try to share content from other RMTs, or reputable massage therapy pages so that you can add some variety and increase the amount of people you reach.
- Like the old saying goes, a picture is worth a thousand words. A video is probably worth a million words. Sharing pictures and/or videos on your social media posts will help them go farther. You should also be sure to tag wherever you share anything from.

PRINT MATERIAL

Many people choose to use brochures in their practice, whether it's to give their patients something to read in the waiting room or to have something for people to take away when they attend public events. However, it's important that any print materials are carefully designed, so they don't end up getting thrown out right away.

PROS

Easy to distribute to visitors.

Brochures and other print content can be well placed in reception areas where patients can easily take them, and they can be easily distributed at events.

Portable and Tangible.

Patients can take print materials home with them to peruse at a later date if they choose, and many people still enjoy marketing material they can hold in their hands. This also welcomes more face-to-face interaction.

Less content competing for attention.

Although all content should be brief, and both print and online content should balance text with pictures, there are millions of other similar websites competing for attention online. Printed materials can more easily keep peoples' attention for longer.

CONS

Cost.

Any print material can represent a significant cost both for creation and print.

Easier to discard.

If your brochure or other print material isn't immediately engaging, it can be easy to just throw it out.

Can become obsolete.

Once you've printed hundreds of copies, it can be harder to change your content if things change. You can avoid this to an extent by ensuring your content is broad and evidence based – if your patients have any questions, they can ask you!

Environmental concern.

Although many print materials are made from recycled papers, producing them, especially when you can end up printing more than you need, can still have a negative impact on the environment

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Who is your audience? Imagine who you want picking up your print content, and tailor your message to what they are most likely to want to know.
- What is your purpose? Before creating a brochure, you should ask yourself what actions you want your audience to take, and keep that in mind at all points throughout the process.
- Limit your text. The more text heavy a brochure or other print material is, the more likely it is to be discarded without being read. Make sure you include a lot of images, and keep your most important text towards the beginning.

THE DOS AND DON'TS OF CONTENT CREATION

In addition to thinking about what channels would be best to convey your message, using the tools available, and reviewing what you absolutely CAN'T post, it's essential to think about what you do want to post. If you don't have a clear, compelling and engaging message, the above tips won't be as helpful. When creating content, keep these dos and don'ts in mind.

DO Have a target audience and know them inside and out. Figure out their demographics, their wants and needs, and what they would and wouldn't like to see, and use it to inform all of your content.

DO Be personable. Although your content should be professional, you don't want it to look like it was created by a faceless corporation. Inject some personality into your content, and write similarly to the way you'd speak to a patient in real life.

DO Find a niche. There are many other RMTs and other health professionals out there, so think about what makes you different from other RMTs in your area. Do you have additional training or a particular interest in treating a certain condition or a certain patient population? Be sure to include that in your marketing materials!

DO Use evidence-based content. You shouldn't be writing in the style of an academic journal, but you want to ensure your content is based on the latest available evidence, so that you project a professional image to the public.

DO Consider your goal, and see if you meet it. Do you want new patients to book with you? Do you want current patients to rebook? Do you want to treat more people from a certain population? Tailor all content to your goal, and after you share your content, regularly monitor to make sure your goals are being met.

DON'T Be overly wordy. Attention spans are short and most people won't be willing to read large blocks of text. Make sure your messages are to the point, and say everything as succinctly as possible. Communicate visually as much as you can.

DON'T Sound too salesy. Of course you need to make a living but you shouldn't make that the main focus of your content. Your focus should be on what your patients would find useful or interesting.

DON'T Forget your call to action. Whether you want someone to book, rebook or contact you directly, make it clear and obvious how they would do that.

DON'T Try to do everything at once. If you try to attract every possible audience or include every possible benefit of massage therapy in your content, your content will be overwhelming to create and ultimately less effective. When it comes to content, go for quality rather than quantity.

DON'T Create content solely to get more business. Of course you want to attract new people to your practice, but it's also important to keep in mind the experience of your current patients. Try to make yourself a trusted source of relevant information, which will encourage your patients to rebook. Before creating any content, imagine how it might be received by your current patients.

LAWS AND REGULATIONS

CASL

The Canadian Anti-Spam Legislation (CASL) dictates who you can send Commercial Electronic Messages (CEMs) to. CEMs are any email, text message or instant message you send on behalf of your business. If you're not contacting a patient about a pre-existing relationship they have with your business, like an appointment they've booked for example, and you want to share general information about the benefits of massage therapy or about a new modality you offer, then you will require express consent (explicit permission given to send these emails, in writing). Patients should have the option to unsubscribe at any time, and the unsubscribe option needs to be clearly displayed in any of your emails.

CMTO

The CMTO has a policy on what can and can't be included in advertising for your practice. Some things that can't be in advertisements include claims or guarantees about a treatment that can't be verified, testimonials, or endorsements of products. Information that can be in advertisements includes general information about the practice, staff, and type of services available.

This is not an exhaustive list, so it's recommended you review the CMTO policy online:

<https://www.cmto.com/policies/administration/advertising/>

PATIENT PRIVACY REQUIREMENTS

RMTs must follow the Personal Health Information Privacy Act (PHIPA), which sets out rules for the collection, use and disclosure of personal health information. This includes any information related to an individual's health, including family health history, as well as any information about the provision of health care.

You should avoid using any personal health information in your content. This includes mentioning who is or is not a patient of yours. You may want to share stories of patients in your practice who have been helped by massage therapy, and that is a great way to market your practice. However, these should not include full names or identifying information for your patients, and should only be created with patients' permission.

When you do want to communicate personal health information by email, e.g. to confirm an appointment, or reinforce remedial exercise already discussed, there are some things you should consider. These include using encryption when communicating with patients over email about their personal health information. If encryption is not possible, determine whether communicating this personal health information is necessary, whether patients expect information to be communicated in that way, and what alternatives are available.

RMTAO TOOLS AVAILABLE

The RMTAO has already created a lot of other resources that can help you market your practice. If you are interested in any of the resources below, do not hesitate to contact the RMTAO at info@rmtao.com, and we will help you to access them.

- **Social Media Toolkit.** This toolkit provides some social media dos and don'ts for RMTs, an overview of the platforms and measurement tools available, an overview of best practices and examples of content you can use.
- **Public Presentation.** This presentation is ideal for speaking to community groups or other members of the public, providing an overview of the benefits of massage therapy and the skills and qualifications of RMTs.
- **Interprofessional Collaboration Toolkit.** This provides you guidance on how to effectively communicate with other regulated health professionals in your patients' circle of care. It includes templates of letters and tips on how to structure your messages.
- **Infographics.** These visual tools outline several unique benefits of massage therapy in an easily digestible and engaging format.
- **Poster.** Our massage therapy poster is available free for download and is a great tool to promote massage therapy.

- **Brochures.** Our brochure “Massage Therapy: What it Can Do For You” contains important information about what massage therapy is, what conditions can benefit from massage therapy, what to expect from a first appointment, and the role of RMTs as health professionals.
- **Blog.** The RMTAO blog contains many articles that you can share to highlight the benefits of massage therapy for particular situations. They include massage therapy for athletes, seniors or pregnancy, or the benefits of massage therapy for the physical symptoms of stress and anxiety, the role of massage therapy in treating work-related injuries, and much more!

SAMPLE CONTENT

EMAIL

Dear *(Patient Name)*,

Low back pain is common – about 80% of adults will experience it at one point in their lifetime. Just because it’s common, doesn’t mean you have to suffer in silence! Massage therapy can help people with low back pain to reduce their pain and get back to doing the activities that you love.

Back pain is one of the more common reasons people have to miss work. It might also mean that you have trouble participating in your favourite sport, playing with your kids as much as you’d like, or even cleaning your house.

When life becomes a pain in the back, as an RMT, I can help! Contact me at *(your contact information)* to talk about what massage therapy can do for you.

BLOG POST

About 80 per cent of Canadian adults will experience low back pain in their lifetime. Low back pain is one of the most common reasons to visit a physician in Canada, a common reason to have to miss work, and the most commonly reported site of chronic pain. Massage therapy can help you by reducing your pain and improving function.

Massage therapy shows particular promise for helping people relieve chronic low back pain, with benefits being shown to last up to six months. Whether your low back pain is acute or chronic, regular massage therapy treatment means that you might have to rely less on pain medications, get back to work sooner, and improve your overall quality of life.

The 2017 Canadian Guideline for Opioids for Chronic Non-Cancer Pain recommends non-pharmacological therapies such as massage therapy for the treatment of chronic low back pain.

Many people believe that you should rest and limit your movement if you have low back pain, but in most scenarios, one of the most important things you can do is to keep moving. Low impact activities and simple activities like walking are usually the best choice, and there are many back-friendly stretches you can do to treat and prevent back pain. Make sure not to overdo it and return to regular activities at your own pace. Heat or ice, depending on your preferences, can help provide temporary pain relief.

I can help you by designing a unique massage therapy treatment plan including recommendations for exercises and stretches. Contact me at *(your contact information)*, to talk about how massage therapy can help your back pain.