



RMTAO Fact Sheet

Who we are

- The Registered Massage Therapists' Association of Ontario (RMTAO) is the professional association of Registered Massage Therapists in Ontario
- There are over 14,000 Registered Massage Therapists in Ontario
- Registered Massage Therapists are regulated by the College of Massage Therapists of Ontario (CMTO) in accordance with the *Regulated Health Professions Act* and the *Massage Therapy Act*.
- Registered Massage Therapists complete a 2-3 year training program and successfully complete an entry-to-practice examination with the CMTO to ensure they are able to effectively and safely provide massage therapy
- Registered Massage Therapists are required to participate in a quality assurance program with the CMTO to ensure continued competence and to maintain high professional practice standards
- Our members, in general, pay 40% of their before tax income for rent and property tax
- Registered Massage Therapists are concerned for their communities and routinely offer free seminars in injury prevention to various locales including community health fairs

Why we are important to Ontario

- Many Ontarians experience physical pain that is associated with various health issues or conditions. Massage therapy can be particularly beneficial for a variety of patient populations and in a variety of treatment environments that represent current challenges in Ontario health care. The RMTAO recognizes the challenges in meeting the health care needs of Ontarians in an efficient and cost-effective manner.
- Our members provide patients relief of pain/anxiety/stress through massage therapy allowing them to return to their normal lives.
- Registered massage therapists work cooperatively and effectively with other health care providers to provide quality healthcare to patients leading to improved health outcomes.
- Massage therapy can be used for both acute and chronic persistent pain that effects patients.
- Our services are paid through private insurers, WSIB, HCAI, and through individual payment and not through OHIP.
- With Ontario's aging population and corresponding increased health care needs, massage therapy is an efficient and cost-effective way of treating patients.

What we do and how we can help

- Massage therapy can treat both acute and chronic conditions

- Massage therapy is a clinically-oriented healthcare option that helps alleviate the discomfort associated with every day and occupational stresses, muscular over-use and many chronic pain conditions
- Physical dysfunction, pain and the effects of stress can be relieved or prevented through the use of massage therapy
- Registered Massage Therapists help to develop, maintain or improve the ability of Ontarians to move and achieve physical independence.
- Many Ontarians experience considerable pain and suffering as they are being treated for particular health care issues. Registered massage therapists provide assistance to these individuals at a relatively low cost to relieve their pain and suffering, both acute and chronic.
- Massage therapy consists primarily of hands-on manipulation of the soft tissues of the body, specifically, the muscles, connective tissue, tendons, ligaments and joints for the purpose of optimizing health
- Registered Massage Therapists work cooperatively and effectively with other health care providers to optimize health outcomes for patients and our hope is to become part of the decision-making process in health care planning in the province.

Issues

Our association recognizes the challenges facing the Government of Ontario in meeting the health care needs of the population in a cost-effective manner. In order to have massage therapy become a more valuable partner in the provision of health care in Ontario the RMTAO would like to highlight some issues where we believe we can assist in providing cost effective therapeutic solutions.

Palliative Care

Ontarians in palliative care often experience extreme persistent and acute pain. Their caregivers watch helplessly when their loved ones suffer in this way. Although patients in palliative care have their pain controlled with medication, it cannot resolve their symptoms fully. Massage therapy can play an essential role in palliative care from the patient's diagnosis and throughout the course of the patient's illness. Massage therapy can provide pain and symptom relief and can improve palliative patients' quality of life. Massage therapy results in immediate symptom relief and promotes better quality sleep. By reducing pain and promoting better rest, oncological palliative care patients note an effective reduction in pain and nausea over time. Massage therapy can decrease perceptions of anxiety, improve sleep quality, and reduce fatigue and can be performed in hospitals, long-term care facilities, and hospices, and under a variety of conditions and environments, to ensure that care is accessible and comfortable.

The RMTAO recommends that massage therapy is included in palliative care collaborative teams to help improve the quality of life of palliative patients.

Home Care Inclusion

Ontario's existing health care system is being challenged with an aging population that utilizes more services while hospitals are suffering from overutilization, in some cases exceeding 20%. Home health care is the solution for so many patients. Registered Massage Therapists commonly travel to the homes

of their patients to provide care. Massage Therapy in the home will be a highly effective form of health care moving forward from a cost and capacity perspective.

Accepted clinical practice guidelines should include massage therapy treatment as a recognized form of treatment to assist with musculoskeletal health issues and issues relating to impaired mobility and physical limitations.

Registered Massage Therapists work effectively with other health care providers, including chiropractors, physiotherapists, and occupational therapists, to improve the health outcomes of patients.

The RMTAO recommends that massage therapy become part of the care received by patients accessing home care as there will continue to be health care challenges for patients in the home with acute and chronic pain.

Chronic or Persistent Pain

Chronic or persistent pain continues to be one of the major health issues impacting so many Ontarians.

Conditions such as fibromyalgia and neuropathic pain are debilitating health issues and massage therapy is often the treatment of choice for these conditions. Massage therapy can improve quality of sleep, pain, quality of life and anxiety levels in patients suffering from persistent pain conditions like fibromyalgia.

Low back pain continues to be a major issue impacting many Ontarians. Low back pain, the most common type of chronic pain, can be relieved by massage therapy treatments, with significant improvements in both pain and function. The Primary Care Low Back Pain Pilot program has provided tangible data on the most effective treatments for low-back pain, and the RMTAO has provided valuable quantitative and qualitative data about the benefits of massage therapy for low-back pain. We wish to continue to be part of the process in finding a solution to this most important issue of chronic low back pain.

Massage therapy is also a recommended alternative to opioids for the management of chronic non-cancer pain.

The RMTAO recommends that massage therapy should be part of the clinical practice guidelines for treating patients with chronic or persistent pain in Ontario. We believe that our profession should be included in Ontario health care professional teams with physiotherapists, chiropractors and other allied professionals in dealing with these health care issues. As well we would recommend that physician training in the province include the important role played by massage therapy in the regular health care regimes of the citizens of Ontario.

Seniors Care

The aging population means that more Ontarians will require seniors care. Hospitals and other long-term care institutions are experiencing substantial expansion in these areas with little relief. Patients at this stage of life continue to have acute and chronic or persistent pain and suffer in many cases in silence. Their loved ones, care givers and health care professionals are at a loss as to what to do other than suggest medication.

Currently massage therapy for seniors is paid by the family and is out of reach for those seniors with no family resources to access this effective care.

Massage therapy can be beneficial for many of the conditions commonly associated with aging, including aches, pain and particular conditions experienced by seniors. It can reduce pain and improve physical function in patients with osteoarthritis. Massage therapy can also reduce physical signs of agitation associated with Alzheimer's disease including pacing, wandering and resisting, and can reduce aggressive behaviours in patients with other forms of dementia.

After a stroke, massage therapy can decrease anxiety and pain, increase quality of life and improve sensorimotor functions. Massage therapy can be provided to seniors in long-term care homes or in their own homes, which makes the treatment more accessible for those with limited mobility.

The RMTAO recommends massage therapy for seniors as an effective treatment to relieve pain, discomfort, and other symptoms of conditions commonly associated with aging for this vulnerable population. The RMTAO believes that massage therapy should be part of the care program in hospitals, at home, and in all long-term care institutions.

Conclusion

In closing, the hope of the Registered Massage Therapists of Ontario is to work in collaboration with the Ontario Ministry of Health and other ministries in the Government of Ontario along with other health care providers and the insurance industry. We strongly believe that massage therapy is an effective treatment for patients with acute and chronic or persistent pain and that through the use of our services patients will have improved health outcomes.

Massage therapy is a safe and effective treatment option for a variety of acute and chronic conditions. Massage therapy is a viable alternative to opioids for pain management, and can positively affect physical symptoms associated with mental illness.

Massage therapy can positively contribute to the overall health of Ontarians, addressing challenges in the health care system. Massage therapy treatments lead to positive health outcomes and the health of Ontarians can only benefit from increasing the access to massage therapy as a cost-effective treatment option.

Thank you

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Executive Director and CEO

Registered Massage Therapists' Association of Ontario