

YOUR HEALTH



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The Evolution Of Medical Massage

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How Medical Massage Evolved

Massage therapy in the U.S. has evolved over decades as intuitive practitioners in an unregulated profession increasingly moved toward greater self-education and self-regulation. The result is that now more than 30 states have passed legislation governing the practice of massage therapy throughout the country.

In addition, the discoveries of innovators, such as John F. Kennedy's personal physician Dr. Janet Travell (who acquired the ability to define trigger points and apply deep pressure techniques to a specific point), revolutionized the world of injury-rehab and pain management and brought greater medical attention to the benefits of hands-on therapy.

As the effectiveness of massage and other specific soft-tissue manipulations were proven to improve patient outcomes, the medical community began to see that such specific treatments not only felt good but also helped to restore the health of medical patients.

Two Basic Types of Massage

The practice of massage therapy seemed to further evolve into two basic choices: Wellness massage (such as relaxation, aromatherapy, etc.) to maintain health and wellness, and medical massage (clinical work viewed as a specific medical treatment for a specific complaint).

While some therapists were more comfortable remaining in the wellness realm, others were drawn to the clinical, rehabilitative aspect of massage therapy and to the difference they could make in their clients' recovery. Some therapists practiced both kinds.

Many found, however, that basic massage-school training, even with an assortment of continuing education courses, did not adequately prepare them to coordinate and communicate proficiently with the medical community. In addition, those therapists who chose to work with insurance claims often lacked proper training in the process.

The growing need of massage therapists to effectively communicate with doctors and physical therapists regarding patient care and to accurately and ethically operate within the guidelines of the insurance industry led to post (massage school)

graduate medical massage classes offered in a structured cohesive manner by a number of continuing education providers. Entire educational programs of study now exist to fill that need.

National Certification Exam

Finally, in 2004, the Medical Massage National Certification Board (MMNCB) was established to cultivate superior clinical and ethical standards for the professional practice of medical massage therapy thereby assuring doctors, insurance companies, and patients a high, formalized standard of care.

The MMNCB administers the National Certification Exam for Medical Massage Therapy. The test was first administered in November 2004. As of February 2006, approximately 150 massage therapists nationwide have passed the stringent testing developed by medical doctors, physical therapists, registered nurses, PhDs and licensed massage therapists and have become nationally certified medical massage therapists (NCMMTs).

Medical massage essentially marries the intuitive aspect of massage therapy with the scientific and outcome-based nature of the medical world and results in better overall patient care as nationally certified medical massage therapists are better equipped to communicate and work with doctors.