



## **POSITION STATEMENT**

### **DISCOUNT COUPONS AND MASSAGE THERAPY**

#### THE USE OF DISCOUNT COUPONS BY REGISTERED MASSAGE THERAPISTS IN ONTARIO

THERE HAS BEEN A GREAT DEAL OF CONFUSION OF LATE REGARDING THE USE OF DISCOUNT COUPONS AND DISCOUNT STRATEGIES BY RMTs IN THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO. THE MATTER IS MADE SOMEWHAT MORE CONFUSING, AS THE CMTO NO LONGER HAS A POLICY OR A POSITION RELATED TO DISCOUNTS. IN AN ATTEMPT TO OFFER GUIDANCE, THE RMTAO HAS CREATED A POSITION ON THIS TOPIC.

BRIEFLY, THE REGISTERED MASSAGE THERAPISTS' ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO DOES NOT SUPPORT THE USE OF DISCOUNT GROUPS FOR THE ADVERTISEMENT OF DISCOUNTED MASSAGE THERAPY TREATMENTS. AN EXCEPTION TO THIS IS WHEN THE DISCOUNT IS APPLIED TO A PRODUCT OR SERVICE OTHER THAN REGISTERED MASSAGE THERAPY. THERE ARE TWO ASPECTS TO THIS POSITION:

1. ARE THE USE OF DISCOUNT COUPONS IN HEALTH CARE APPROPRIATE;
2. DO DISCOUNT COUPONS MAKE GOOD BUSINESS SENSE?

TO ANSWER THE QUESTION AS TO WHETHER OR NOT DISCOUNT COUPONS IN HEALTH CARE ARE APPROPRIATE, THE RMTAO BELIEVES THAT THEY ARE NOT. AS A REGULATED HEALTH PROFESSION, THE USE OF DISCOUNT COUPONS, UNRELATED TO PATIENT NEED, IS INAPPROPRIATE AND UNPROFESSIONAL. IT DEMONSTRATES THAT WE, AS A PROFESSION, ARE WILLING TO UNDERVALUE OUR EXPERT KNOWLEDGE AND ROLE WITHIN PATIENTS' HEALTH CARE.

CMTO GUIDELINES DO PERMIT REDUCED FEES ON A PATIENT-SPECIFIC BASIS IN ORDER TO ENABLE ACCESS TO THOSE WHO ARE UNABLE TO BENEFIT FROM OUR PROFESSION DUE TO ECONOMIC HARDSHIP OR REDUCED INCOME. BECAUSE A POTENTIAL PATIENT WISHES TO SAVE MONEY IS AN INAPPROPRIATE USE OF THAT VERY SPECIFIC TOOL THAT HELPS TO DEFINE US AS A CARING AND COMPASSIONATE PROFESSIONALS IN HEALTH CARE.

IN RELATION TO THE SECOND QUESTION, AS TO WHETHER OR NOT DISCOUNT COUPONS MAKE GOOD BUSINESS SENSE FOR RMTs, THE RMTAO BELIEVES THAT THEY DO NOT. THE PREMISE OF DISCOUNT COUPONS IS THAT THE WELL KNOWN DISCOUNT GROUPS PROMOTE THE LESSER KNOWN RMT FOR A SIGNIFICANTLY DISCOUNTED PRICE WHERE HUNDREDS OR THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE MIGHT BUY THE DISCOUNT COUPON. WHILE THIS MAY WORK FOR

RESTAURANTS OR SIMILAR BUSINESSES WHERE MASS SERVICE IS POSSIBLE, IT WILL NOT WORK FOR SOMEONE THAT SEES ONLY ONE 'CUSTOMER' AT A TIME. IN ADDITION, DISCOUNT COUPON COMPANIES MAY TAKE 50% OF THE ALREADY DISCOUNTED SERVICE OR PRODUCT. THE DISCOUNT COUPONS ARE AVAILABLE TO PEOPLE FROM OUTSIDE OF THE RMT'S NEIGHBOURHOOD WHICH MEANS IT IS LIKELY THAT SOMEONE USING THE DISCOUNT COUPON WILL NOT BECOME A RETURN 'CUSTOMER'.

TO OFFER AN EXAMPLE THAT ILLUSTRATES THE FINANCIAL ELEMENT OF THIS BUSINESS TRANSACTION: \$80 FOR A REGULAR THERAPEUTIC MASSAGE REDUCED BY 50% IS \$40. THE DISCOUNT COUPON COMPANY TAKES 50% WHICH LEAVES THE THERAPIST WITH \$20. THIS IS NOT PURE PROFIT SINCE NEITHER H.S.T., OVERHEAD, OR PAYMENT OF A SPLIT HAS NOT YET BEEN FACTORED IN. THE BUSINESS MODEL DOES NOT WORK AND IS DETRIMENTAL TO THE ECONOMIC VIABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PROFESSION.

IN CONCLUSION, IT IS THE POSITION OF THE RMTAO THAT THE USE OF DISCOUNT COUPONS COMPROMISES THE PROFESSION'S ETHICAL STANDING AND CREDIBILITY WITHIN THE LARGER HEALTH CARE COMMUNITY AND THAT THERE DOES NOT SEEM TO BE AN ARGUMENT FOR THE USE OF DISCOUNT COUPONS AS A BUSINESS STRATEGY.