



POSITION STATEMENT

MEMBER-BASED MASSAGE

BACKGROUND

CONCERNS REGARDING MEMBER-BASED MASSAGE SURFACED AS THE NUMBER OF CLINICS USING THIS BUSINESS MODEL INCREASED IN ONTARIO. MEMBERS OF THE PROFESSION VOICED CONCERNS THAT MEMBER-BASED MASSAGE IS DETRIMENTAL TO THE PROFESSION. SPECIFICALLY, IT WAS SUGGESTED THAT:

- ✦ THESE TYPES OF CLINICS PROVIDE DISCOUNTS FOR TREATMENT WELL BELOW COMMONLY ACCEPTED FEES THEREBY COMPETING UNFAIRLY WITH OTHER REGISTERED MASSAGE THERAPIST (RMTs);
- ✦ RMTs EMPLOYED BY THESE CLINICS WERE OVERWORKED AND UNDERPAID;
- ✦ THE QUALITY OF TREATMENT PROVIDED BY THESE CLINICS IS BELOW THE ACCEPTED STANDARD
- ✦ PATIENTS ARE TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF AS THEY ARE REQUIRED TO PAY FOR A MONTHLY FEE, EVEN IF NO MASSAGE TREATMENT IS PROVIDED.

THE RMTAO MET WITH OWNERS OF A MEMBER-BASED MASSAGE CLINIC TO DISCUSS THESE CONCERNS. FURTHER TO THIS, THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS SOLICITED FEEDBACK FROM THE MEMBERS AT THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD IN JANUARY 2012 ABOUT THIS MODEL. THE FOLLOWING POSITION IS BASED UPON THIS CONSULTATION.

POSITION

IT IS THE POSITION OF THE RMTAO THAT MEMBER-BASED MASSAGE CLINICS ARE NOT DETRIMENTAL TO THE PRACTICE OF MASSAGE THERAPY IN ONTARIO. THIS POSITION STATEMENT IS MADE ON THE BASIS OF FOUR RELATED CONSIDERATIONS:

FEES—ALTHOUGH THE FEES FOR MEMBERS OF A MEMBER-BASED MASSAGE CLINIC MAY BE LOWER THAN NON-MEMBER FEES OR FEES SET BY OTHER MASSAGE THERAPISTS, THEY ARE NOT ILLEGAL OR AGAINST POLICY SET BY THE COLLEGE OF MASSAGE THERAPISTS OF ONTARIO (CMTO). SOME CONFUSION STILL EXISTS AROUND THIS IDEA, PERHAPS IN PART DUE TO RECENT AMENDMENTS TO THE ADVERTISING REGULATION AND POLICY (FLITTON, 2011).

THE RMTAO FEELS THAT WHEN PATIENTS CHOOSE AN RMT, THE FEES SET BY THE CLINIC OR PRACTITIONER IS ONLY ONE OF MANY FACTORS INCLUDED IN THE DECISION. AVAILABILITY, LOCATION, INDIVIDUAL PREFERENCE, FOCUS OF PRACTICE AND YEARS OF EXPERIENCE ARE ALSO FACTORS PATIENTS ANECDOTALLY REPORT TO CONSIDER WHEN

SEARCHING FOR A RMT. THE RMTAO HAS FOUND NO EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST THAT COMPETITIVE PRICING HAS HAD A DETRIMENTAL EFFECT ON THE PROFESSION AS A WHOLE.

RMT WORKLOAD AND COMPENSATION – EACH RMT MUST DETERMINE HIS OR HER OWN LIMITS REGARDING THE NUMBER OF TREATMENT HE OR SHE IS ABLE TO PERFORM. THE RMTAO ENCOURAGES ALL MEMBERS TO REFLECT ON THEIR PRACTICE REGULARLY, INCLUDING AMOUNT AND TYPE OF TREATMENT, TO ENCOURAGE LONGEVITY AND GOOD HEALTH FOR MEMBERS OF THE PROFESSION. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST THAT RMTs ARE OVERWORKED AT MEMBER-BASED MASSAGE CLINICS MORE THAN ANY OTHER PRACTICE ENVIRONMENT.

SIMILARLY, EACH RMT MUST CHOOSE A PRACTICE ENVIRONMENT THAT SUITS THEM; THIS INCLUDES CHOOSING A MODEL OF COMPENSATION THAT FITS THE PRACTITIONER'S EXPECTATIONS. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST THAT ONE MODEL (EMPLOYEE VS. INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR VS. RENT) IS BETTER THAN ANOTHER. IT HAS BEEN SUGGESTED THAT, WHILE THE HOURLY RATE FOR MASSAGE MAY BE LOW AT MEMBER-BASED CLINICS THAN A PERCENT SPLIT AT OTHER CLINICS, THE GUARANTEED HOURLY WAGE WHETHER TREATMENT IS PROVIDED OR NOT MAY BE MORE BENEFICIAL TO SOME THERAPISTS. THE RMTAO ENCOURAGES ALL MEMBERS TO EXAMINE THEIR OWN NEEDS TO DETERMINE WHAT IS RIGHT FOR THEM.

TREATMENT STANDARDS – ALL RMTs ARE HELD TO THE SAME ENTRY-TO-PRACTICE AND QUALITY ASSURANCE STANDARDS. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT RMTs PRACTICING AT MEMBER-BASED MASSAGE CLINICS PROVIDE TREATMENT THAT IS INCONSISTENT WITH THE STANDARDS AND EXPECTATIONS TO WHICH ALL RMTs ARE HELD. THE RMTAO WOULD REMIND ALL THERAPISTS THAT THEY ARE EXPECTED, AND REQUIRED, TO PERFORM A HEALTH INTERVIEW AND ASSESSMENT, CREATE A TREATMENT PLAN, PROVIDE SAFE AND APPROPRIATE TREATMENT, AND DOCUMENT THE ENCOUNTER REGARDLESS OF THEIR PRACTICE ENVIRONMENT.

FINANCIAL RISK OF HARM – RMTs WHO PRACTICE IN MEMBER-BASED MASSAGE CLINICS ARE SUBJECT TO THE SAME REGULATIONS WITH RESPECT TO PROVIDING RECEIPTS FOR TREATMENT AS THERAPISTS IN ANY OTHER PRACTICE ENVIRONMENT. IT IS UNDERSTOOD BY THE RMTAO THAT PATIENTS ARE ONLY CHARGED FOR TREATMENTS THAT THEY RECEIVE AND RECEIPTS ARE PROVIDED AS SUCH.

SUMMARY

IN SUMMARY, THE RMTAO BELIEVES THAT MEMBER-BASED MASSAGE CLINICS ARE NOT DETRIMENTAL TO THE PRACTICE OF MASSAGE THERAPY IN ONTARIO. IN SOME CASES, THIS PRACTICE MODEL MAY PROVIDE ACCESS TO MASSAGE THERAPY TO ONTARIANS WHO MIGHT OTHERWISE BE UNABLE TO AFFORD TREATMENT. FURTHER, THIS MODEL MAY PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR RMTs, WHICH INCLUDE EMPLOYEE BENEFITS AND THE POTENTIAL TO EARN AN INCOME WITHOUT THE COMPLICATIONS OF RUNNING A BUSINESS ON THEIR OWN.

REFERENCES

FLITTON, C. (2011). ADVERTISING DISCOUNTS: AMENDMENTS TO THE ADVERTISING REGULATION AND POLICY. *COLLEGE STANDARD*, 18(2): 17.