



M.T. Wellness

Our mission: to reduce pain and restore physical function

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Special insert: For your wellness

Tips to prevent and relieve chronic headaches



M.T. Wellness
1151 Bethel Rd., Ste. 302
Columbus, OH 43220
(614) 273-0810
www.mtwellnessclinic.com
info@mtwellnessclinic.com

Thuy's corner

In support of a two-track system of massage therapy training



The diversity of the massage therapy field is wonderful, but it can also be a burden: the public easily can become confused about what type of practice/practitioner is best for them. There are so many types of therapies used for healing—from craniosacral to Swedish, from deep tissue to hot stone, from chiropractic to orthopedic to physical and sports therapies. How can you know which approach is most appropriate for your particular issue? Moreover, how can you be sure that a massage therapist has the fundamental preparation and training to help you make that determination?

The two-track system of training

That's one of the reasons why I advocate for two types of training in massage therapy: one level for traditional therapists and another for medical massage therapists who choose to be to work within a medical model and are willing to take on the additional cost, training, and responsibility of partnering with the medical community.

I believe two-track training will allow for massage therapy to move into the health care system in a new way, in a way that will bring our extraordinary knowledge into the mainstream. (I have a dream of every doctor's office having a restorative medical massage therapist on staff!).


Goals for getting there

But it isn't going to be easy. The massage therapy field, in the words of Rodney Dangerfield, "gets no respect" from many physicians, and there are good reasons for this, not the least of which is the small number of hours required to be licensed and the emphasis on relaxation and intuition rather than on evidence-based science and results.

So, to become part of the health care mainstream, a new field of massage therapy is emerging made up of therapists who are willing to accept more structured discipline. A more structured discipline demands advanced medical training to distinguish the level of medical knowledge from that of traditional massage therapists.

MT Wellness is built on a medical model, and most of our referrals come through physicians (we work with over 100 in Columbus) and other therapists. The therapists in our office partner regularly with the medical community and take intensive, advanced medical training. Our goal is to reduce pain and restore physical function, to enhance the care our patients are receiving from their health care providers, and, most of all, to do no harm.

An expanding field

Through our Medical Model Massage Institute, which will launch in 2009, we hope to train more therapists to enter into this booming field. Read more about the Institute on page two and at www.mtwellnessclinic.com. 

Let's catch up!

Introducing the Medical Model Massage Institute

MT. Wellness is expanding! We are launching the first primary massage therapy training program in the country based on a medical model. The Medical Model Massage Institute will meet the growing need for skilled therapists capable of helping patients reduce pain through massage therapy applied within the structure of a medical model.

What we mean by “medical model”

There is growing interest within the massage therapy community in removing the public burden of confusion concerning professional medical versus “traditional” massage therapy. By focusing on massage therapy as a health care profession, and by offering medical training to massage therapists so that they may work as part of each patient’s health care team, this new program offers a new and exciting career path for massage therapists.

Institute curriculum

The Institute curriculum emphasizes:

- knowledge of human anatomy and function, physiology, muscle pathologies, and selected leading massage therapy techniques to reduce pain
- a team approach
- the practice of massage therapy within the medical model of musculoskeletal assessment, medical terminology, treatment, and documentation of individualized plans of care based on each patient’s muscle pathology

At the end of the nearly year-long program, students are well prepared for the licensure process, and they are also uniquely prepared to converse fluently with the medical community, including insurance companies.

Medical massage therapists are trained to “do no harm”; they will be able to detect red flags, i.e., abnormal moles, blood clots,

abnormal pain complaints, etc. These therapists will know when to refer patients to the appropriate providers, and effectively promote wellness and prevention.

From Institute to Masters Center

In addition, graduates of the Institute are fully prepared to enter our Masters Center. The Masters Center Training for Certification in Medical Restorative Massage Therapy® (MRMT) is an advanced training course of study in MRMT targeted to licensed massage therapists. The Masters Center curriculum emphasizes:

- distinguishing medical conditions from orthopedic conditions to better align ourselves with other medical experts
- knowledge of multiple disciplines through working with physicians and experts in orthopedic, chiropractic, physical, and massage therapies, and other therapists
- knowledge of how to help patients reduce pain without chasing their pain, restore physical function, and generally regain their quality of life using assessment skills learned; treat each patient with an individualized Plan of Care

How does the Institute differ from the typical massage school approach?

By the time a student finishes with the training at a typical massage school, he or she knows how to give a full body relaxation massage, aka Swedish massage, and has completed approximately 750+ hours of training.

What the Medical Model Massage

Institute does differently is teach the more-advanced medical knowledge that allows a student to function within the health care mainstream. Graduating from this program is excellent preparation for the licensure process.


The need for medical model massage therapy training

Massage therapists spend more one-on-one time with patients than perhaps any

What the Medical Model Massage Institute does differently is teach the more-advanced medical knowledge that allows a student to function within the health care mainstream.

other medical professional (30 minutes to one hour at time), which means they can have a lot of influence on the care of patients. With a medical model training curriculum that is in synch with the medical field, they can be full partners with each patient’s health care team.

Learning proper assessment techniques will prepare therapists to address symptoms—rather than chase the pain—and actively involving patients in their own treatment and self-care.

For more information about the Medical Model Massage Institute, contact director@mtwellnessclinic.com. 

Remembering Karen Banks

Karen Banks was a patient of mine who passed away last January from ovarian cancer. Karen was a teacher, puppeteer, and volunteer who lived life to the fullest, always teaching and sharing of herself. I learned so much from Karen, and I wanted to take a moment to honor her memory. —Thuy

M.T. Wellness is seeking your help

To bring the massage therapy professional to the next level, we need more MRMT therapists

Musculoskeletal pain, particularly lower back pain, is among the fastest growing problems health care professionals encounter in their patients. And the single biggest challenge health care professionals face is dealing with chronic pain cycle (Diagram 1, p. 4).

Chronic musculoskeletal pain patients have often been through many treatment therapies, ranging from non-invasive—such as medications, massage, manipulations, acupuncture, and exercise—to invasive procedures such as injections and surgeries, without maintained benefit.

Medical restorative massage therapy has become the therapy of choice for hundreds

of M. T. Wellness clients experiencing musculoskeletal pain, even chronic musculoskeletal pain. Why? Because it produces results that other courses of treatment are not delivering.

In *The Back Letter's* November 2007 issue, an article “New Clinical Guidelines on the Diagnosis and Treatment of Low Back Pain: Will They Prove Useful or Not?” reported the following findings for several types of low back pain treatment:

- Progressive relaxation—“substantial” benefit with “fair” quality of evidence
- Cognitive behavioral therapy, exercise therapy, interdisciplinary rehabilitation,

and spinal manipulation—“moderate” benefit with “good” quality of evidence

- Massage, acupuncture, and yoga—“moderate” benefit with “fair” quality of evidence

Although “traditional” massage therapy produces “moderate” benefit with only “fair” quality of evidence in dealing with chronic back pain, based on the American Massage Therapy Association (AMTA) survey, October 2007, “...More people get massage therapy... Thirty percent of all people who received a massage in the last five years got it for medical reasons, compared to 22 percent who sought relaxation,

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Success stories

After getting positive feedback from Kristina E., we asked for her story for this column. We'd be interested in hearing your story, too! Please email info@mtwellness.com.

“After having monthly migraines throughout my 30's, I turned 40 and started to experience frequent, painful—sometimes severe—migraines, which eventually began triggering anxiety (fear of the pain). At 42, I started a new job and began experiencing chronic daily tension headaches. Spots along the left side of my body were tender and achy all the time, including hip, shoulder, and neck.

“Over the next four years, I worked so hard to try to figure out what was going wrong with me, and to develop a “team” of health care practitioners that could help. I went to the alternative medical doctor who prescribed vitamins, the chiropractor, and the acupuncturist, and I got weekly massages. I took medication for migraines, and Paxil and Lyrica for the tension headaches and anxiety.

“All of these things seemed to help keep me from getting worse, but the symptoms didn't go away. I was really frustrated.

“Then, two things happened that started to change things. One was learning about the effect of hormones on the body's chemistry. The other was M.T. Wellness. I was getting weekly Swedish massage, so I wasn't looking for a massage therapist. But the name popped up in conversation with a friend, and when I went to the web site, the approach described was different than typical massage. So I gave them a try.

“The first thing that happened after my first few sessions was that my anxiety level really dropped. It was like my body knew on a deep level that the right help was on the way. The pain along the left side of my body subsided.

“My sessions focused largely on the neck and face, and on working out the

See the special insert for headache prevention tips to keep at your desk!

tension and scar tissue that had built up over my life (from a couple of bouts of whiplash, head snaps during high school drill team, clenching my jaws, and over-stretching my neck because I thought more flexibility was the answer).

“The answer—or at least an important key—turned out to be less stretching and more activation of the muscles in my neck and shoulders. I was taught simple movements to activate my neck muscles instead of direct stretching, and also about the importance of ice and heat and correct body alignment.

“I'm only getting one migraine a month around my period now. I'm still working on the tension headaches that come on after a long day in front of the computer, but those have become milder. I'm confident that, in time and with the help of M.T. Wellness, I will completely break the pain cycle.”

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and 13 percent for a simple indulgence. Almost one-third (32 percent) of Americans say they've used massage therapy at least one time for pain relief—just behind those who have turned to chiropractic (38 percent) and physical therapy (44 percent)...” People are willing to spend their out of pocket money to have pain relief. The amount is astounding—in the billions of dollars.

Addition research in the field also suggests that effective control of low back pain should involve the resumption of normal and routine activities. Addressing the pain, but ignoring the need to resume normal activities, is a recipe for chronic pain and loss of quality of life.

From my experience as a massage therapist, I agree with the research that suggests effective treatment of chronic low back pain requires patients to resume usual activities, meaning they need to move. My experience suggests healing occurs with movement and not through just passively receiving treatment.

From my experience, getting someone with chronic pain to welcome movement and exercise is a challenge. Many of these patients are on medications; however, research shows that pain medication is helpful with acute back pain but does not have proven benefit for chronic back pain. From *The Back Letter*: "...Focusing too heavily on pain and pain relief in a non-specific, recurrent condition may actually serve as an obstacle to functional recovery...pursuing pain relief instead of plunging back into normal living as quickly as possible may encourage inactivity and disability. Given that back pain is the leading premise for work disability in the United States, this is not a remote threat..."

People with chronic pain are often depressed; some gain a lot of weight due to inactivity, which may lead to other medical conditions and more medications—a vicious cycle that we as health care providers want and need to help our clients break.

Traditional massage therapy definitely helps people reduce pain! Of course, you already know that. And people in pain are

willing to self-pay for relief of this pain! But reducing pain is only part of the solution: restoring movement and physical function is the ultimate goal.

Medical Restorative Massage Therapy® (MRMT) is a new, emerging discipline that fills the void between traditional massage therapy (what people want) and physical therapy (what people need).

MRMT is influenced by the following disciplines: Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation (PM&R), Osteopathic Medicine (DO), Chiropractic (DC), Physical Therapy (PT), Occupational Therapy (OT), traditional Massage Therapy (LMT), yoga, pilates, and the Alexander Technique.

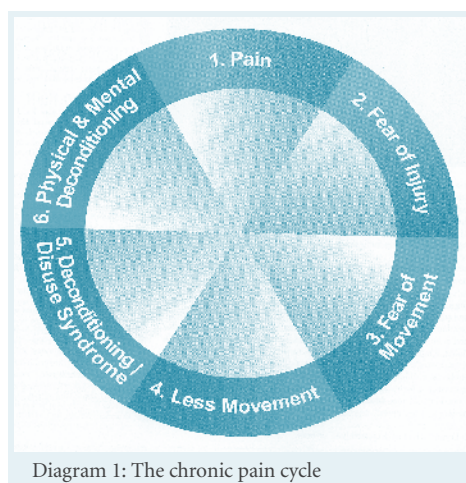


Diagram 1: The chronic pain cycle

The MRMT discipline is the collective effort of multiple rehabilitation clinicians, therapists, and others who contribute to our training, including: PM&R physicians, DCs, PTs, LMTs, and CMRMTs.

MRMT is results driven! We use passive techniques to reduce pain and active techniques to restore movement and function utilizing the medical model. We educate patients on posture, symmetry and balance, and self care techniques.

Unlike traditional massage therapy training, our training focuses on assessment based on the pathology of musculoskeletal and neurological conditions; we recognize medical conditions vs. musculoskeletal conditions, understand symmetry, balance, and posture; understand body movement with gravity involved, muscle action, and reverse muscle action associated with

movement; and communicate with patients' health care providers so we can be an integral part of their care. Currently, we work with over local 100 physicians!

We are amazed at the tremendous business growth we have experienced! In the last four years, our business has doubled. We have employees rather than independent contractors, and their schedules are booked weeks in advance. Unlike traditional massage where therapists only get paid when they massage, we are able to guarantee pay—salaries and benefits.

But there are too few trained MRMT therapists to meet current and future demand. Our challenge is to recruit and educate massage therapists to think outside of the traditional route of working for themselves, for a spa, for a chiropractor, etc.

The traditional educational approach of workshops costing between \$300-\$500 that focus on one technique or one approach crammed into a weekend do not prepare therapists to successfully make a living.

Yes, our education is intensive, but we offer employment to the selected graduates. We guarantee our new CMRMT therapists will make a decent living doing the work they train to do and have the opportunity for advancement and a career in the profession.

Our business plan is designed that as therapists get older, if they wish, they can utilize their skills and talent to mentor or teach junior therapists and still make a good living without the physical stress and demands from the actual work.

Our goal is to bring the massage therapy profession to the next level, helping therapists successfully stay in their chosen profession for longer than the three year duration statistics show, and attract more people to enter the field who want to, but do not due to income limitations.

We are seeking your help! Do you know anyone who wants to be part of a rapidly growing MRMT business that offers tremendous personal and financial rewards? If so, please contact us, or refer your friends, family or colleagues to us.

We would welcome the opportunity to talk with them about this rewarding field! 