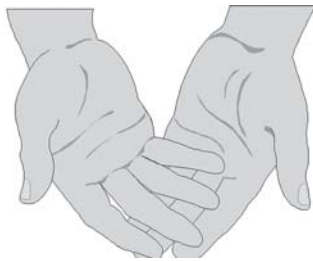


TAKE



HOLD

Newsletter of the Massage Therapists Association of Nova Scotia

Summer 2007

*“There is nothing
permanent except
change”*

Heraclitus



Lifting Up the Profession

A few weeks ago I was asked to speak to the students at CCMH in Bedford. I presented on my favourite technique, Manual Lymph Drainage. Before concluding the floor was opened up for questions.

Interestingly, a few days prior to my visit an elderly patient of mine had been to the school. He has MS and spoke to the students about the needs of a mobility challenged person and how massage therapy benefited him. During that discussion he commented on his massage experience and being turned from supine to prone. “Well,” he said, “she (meaning me) just flips me over like a pancake.”

Back to my visit to the school. Instead of addressing a question about my MLD presentation, I was questioned about how to flip someone over like a pancake. Well, thanks to those long ago lifeguard sessions I was able to demonstrate. It’s all about using fulcrums and levers. The first time, however, was a bit of a challenge.

I have heard therapists lament that the schools don’t teach students how to use their bodies well in order to prevent injury. Further, I have often been asked how I’ve survived a twenty-year career, much of it doing deep tissue work. My answer has

always been to recognize the importance of mechanics – I had great mentors who instilled this in me. I have always used a lift table – I use a Care Tech table (www.caretechresearch.com) but other models are available. Lift tables allow the therapist to work in all positions with all sizes and shapes of bodies with relative ease. Avid drivers may want a BMW, fashion fans may want Vera Wang, but for me it’s a lift table.

It’s also very important to have a large toolbox - many techniques and tricks to draw from. My many years of continuing education have paid off. Having various techniques at one’s disposal is essential to be able to vary treatments and avoid overwork. The therapist will then also be able to adjust to the unique size and sensitivity of each and every body.

Once the equipment is in place and the techniques are learned then it’s time to experience the dance – enjoy your work. Work well done is a source of joy as well as giving. Energy flows both ways. It’s serious, and I still do ongoing study, continue to learn and am often looking things up. I know I’ll never know it all, but it’s a journey - one stroke at a time. It’s also a feast - one pancake at a time.

Take Hold Guidelines

General

Newsletter deadlines:

Winter: November 1st (printed Dec. 15)

Spring: February 1st (printed Mar. 15)

Summer: May 1st (printed June 15)

Fall: August 1st (printed Sept. 15)

All text-only submissions should be sent in MSWord or rtf format. Other file formats may be acceptable. Please contact the Editor first.

The editor reserves the right to edit and place material and advertisements where appropriate, and to accept or reject material deemed inappropriate.

All emails to the Journal should contain your **full name, mailing address and telephone number** so that any difficulties can be quickly corrected.

Contributors

Newsletter content for related articles, book reviews, reports etc. is welcome. Email attachments preferred.

Advertisers

All ads are subject to approval.

Camera-ready advertising content should be sent in JPG format (minimum 300dpi). Other file formats (such as MSWord) may be acceptable, but may incur additional charges for desk top publishing. Please contact the Editor for details.

Advertising Rates

\$30 per half page

\$60 per full page

Classified ads are free to MTANS members except for course advertising.

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From the Editor

Welcome to Take Hold Summer 2007. I know I retired after the last issue, but I'm working on a few members to see if they will come forward and take the reins therefore, one more issue from me. In this issue I would like to welcome our new President, Wanda Candolini, who helped me on my first couple editions of Take Hold. She sends her good wishes to all the members in her Presidents column.

I looked further afield for this edition of Focus in the Field to a therapist who was just a year behind me at WCCMT. Yvonne Poulin has taken on a great challenge with establishing a massage therapy school in Nairobi, Kenya. showing we are part of a bigger world and have a great deal to contribute if we think outside of the box.

Early May found many of us at White Point attending not only the SAGM but a fabulous weekend of camaraderie, learning, fine dining and getting to know each other. I

would recommend a getaway like this to anyone wanting to know other therapists and to see what is happening outside our own clinics. Peggy gives us the low down on behalf of the SAGM committee.

Also in this issue, we welcome Alexandra Lynch. She has researched the effectiveness of Epsom salts and bathes us in information as to why we recommend their use to our clients.

We have general information from the association with listings of the new Board and Committees, as well as a notice to the membership form Blue Cross.

I wish you all a great summer.

Yours in health,

Sandra

PS I would like thank Alexandra Grant-Paul for her tirelessness and patience in assisting with the layout of this newsletter.



Inside...

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President's Message

Thoughts from Wanda

The SAGM showed us that we can come together and laugh, learn and listen to one another. I would like to thank you all for taking the time to stand up and share.

June means Graduations and Graduations means we will be having new Massage Therapists joining us. Lets reach out a hand and welcome our new colleagues. into our noble Profession.

Many of us work in isolation from each other and I commend Kentville MT's who get together socially and invite new MT's to join them. I am sure other area's do it and we would love to hear about it.

In keeping with wanting to be transparent to our members, our regular monthly board meetings will include a scheduled time to meet with individual committees. It will give all committee's a chance to exchange their thoughts and concerns with the Directors. An invitation to our June 12 meeting has already been extended to our Public Relations committee.

MTANS is once again run by all volunteers and we need members to get involved.

The Board of Directors have become active on our committees and looking forward to others joining them.

Many of you are multi-talented and we could use your help in promoting our Association.

Are you good with Computer? Great, we could use you on the Website committee.

How about Promotions? Public Relations needs help in educating the Health Professionals and Public.

Do you enjoy writing? Think about helping out with the Take Hold Newsletter.

Did you acetreatments in school? How about the Standards and Examination Committee?

Good with numbers? CEU committee may be for you.

Were you ever class monitor? Complaints needs your expertise.

Want change? Then step forward and help us work towards it.

Plans are underway to recognize our veteran Massage Therapists at our Annual General Meeting in October I hope all members will join in honouring these individual members and their commitment to our profession.

For the moment we have decided not to hire another executive director. As President I will be wearing both hats for now. I am surrounded on the board by very committed hard working members, who like you want to move MTANS forward.

I consider it a privilege and honor to serve as your new President and work with the Directors of the Board for the continued good of MTANS.

Sincerely,

Wanda Candolini, President

CMTA launches new website

The CMTRN is a committee of the Canadian Massage Therapist Alliance (CMTA). It strives to educate massage therapists, other health care practitioners, and the public about massage therapy related research activities in Canada.

The new CMTRN website acts as a research resource. It also works as a network for asking questions and meet other people interested in MT research.

For more information check out: www.cmtrn.ca

Something on your mind?

We want to hear about it.

MTANS members want to hear your stories, celebrate your successes and understand your concerns.

Write to us at:
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Letter to the Editor

After spending a big part of the last three years thinking that I might be the only Massage Therapist who thought government legislation was a bad idea, I began to discuss the subject with some fellow therapists.

Much to my surprise, the majority of them felt the same way. When asked why no one had ever brought it up at a meeting, I got pretty much the same answer from all of them ... an overall feeling of intimidation, and concern over possible repercussions.

As far back as I can remember I felt that I was being subjected to a constant barrage of MTANS officials **telling** me that I wanted legislation ... not once has anyone ever **asked** me what I wanted.

The time has come for the brainwashing tactics to stop. Each of us needs to take a long hard look at what is really best for us. Instead of blindly accepting what we're being told the benefits of legislation are, it's time to dig a little deeper.

My own search for the truth has shown me that legislation actually can guarantee us a few things. First, if we consider the relatively low number of therapists in the province and the astronomical cost of starting and maintaining a college, it becomes obvious that our annual dues will quickly go \$400/year to thousands.

Chiropractors for example are currently paying \$6000 per year in Canada. Consider also that MTANS is attempting to secure the legal

rights to the term "RMT." If they are successful, no other association will be able to exist, and there are very few things more dangerous than a monopoly. At that point, regardless of what rate is set for our annual dues, either we will pay it, or we will not practice. It's that simple.

The only other thing that legislation can truly guarantee us is miles of red tape and bureaucracy anytime we want anything done.

I am not suggesting that anyone should think the way I do ... just think! Disregard what you have been told in the past, even what I'm telling you now, and formulate your own opinions. Remember: the common consensus is not always right.

Tom Henwood, RMT

Legislation: What next?

Several years ago, the Membership mandated the Board to pursue legislation. A great deal of energy, time and money has gone into this pursuit. Legislation is important for credibility, protection of title (CMTO holds the RMT copyright), practice standards, defining the profession through bylaws, etc.

Legislation's primary purpose, however, is protection of the public. It also permits application for GST exemption and income tax deductibility. MTANS has been able to accomplish many goals, unity, proof of risk of harm, and

professional support, others however, are not possible without legislation.

The Department of Health committed in 2005 to write new legislation since the Act passed in 2003 was not liked by the DoH and thus not proclaimed. It is not clear what input the MTANS would have directly but that legislation should be acceptable. Unfortunately, all we have received to date have been continued promises of being on the next legislative agenda... and then the next and so on.

There is a possibility that the government will again propose 'umbrella legislation', similar to the Health Professions Act (BC) and the Registered Health Professions Act (ON), potentially taking longer as other professions may be involved, i.e., Naturopath, Midwives.

Discussion at the SAGM was varied and resulted in a vote to suspend lobbying efforts at this time. A committee was created to gather info on all the options for the AGM (October 07) and proceed with the will of the membership at that time.

MTANS SAGM 2007: A gathering of our Community!

Peg McMartin, SAGM Committee



On May 4, 5 and 6th, the SAGM Committee witnessed, participated in & collaborated to present

the inaugural massage therapy conference in NS.

The committee, formed after the November AGM, pulled together what I can only say from my biased perspective, an excellent eventful weekend. It was an honour and a pleasure to work with and come to know the ladies of the committee; Bobbi-Jo Ferguson Hill, Jessica Smith, Cindy Whynacht and Monica Miller. Together with Fred we worked tirelessly to bring this event to our community.

I use the word community because I think we forget when working in smaller practices and communities just how many of us are out there. The weekend reminded me that we are just that and it made me proud to be a member of our association to participate in the beginning of what I hope to be many conferences to come. Congratulations to all!!

The event kicked off with registration that offered each participant a goodie bag filled to the brim with free products, coupons, information and a folder to keep all our conference workshop notes in. Concurrently, the trade show opened and offered a multitude of services, self care products, supplies, and information on up coming alternative courses.

Following registration the meet and greet offered excellent munchies and wine from Just as well as awesome entertainment provided by one of our own, Bonnie Jean MacDonald and her cousin Brennan formerly of Kilt fame.

The next two days offered workshops to suit a variety of interests presented by speakers from near and far. A banquet featuring a key-note address with Melanie Hayden, of Upledger, who gave an inspiring speech "Cellular Joy" about finding more ways to bring joy to our lives and our practices. All this was set in spectacular surroundings of White Point Resort.

It was a blessing to have White Point host this event and the experience of their staff especially Alana Hirtle, the conference co-ordinator. Alana and her staff made our experience that much more. They ordered up bon fires on the beach, full moons over the ocean view, and a rainbow to kick off our banquet what more could we have asked for.

Capping off the weekend was the SAGM. The SAGM proved once again to be both interesting and eventful.

As a committee member I thank all in our community for attending and for their feedback and support. I look forward to making the conference committee a standing committee this fall and hope to see you all next year; the planning has already begun!!!

Highlights:

The 2007 Semi-Annual General Meeting of MTANS was held at White Point Resort and was a great success with lots of lively discussion.

We are now 764 members strong. Quorum was present with 137 members in attendance and 59 members represented by proxy for a total of 196 members.

Fred Lawson, former Executive Director, and Past President Suzanne Lacroix were recognized for their hard work over the past couple years. Cards were signed to thank them and wish them well.

Committee Reports were reviewed and accepted.

The status of legislation was discussed (see page 4) followed by a motion to suspend further work with the lobbyists until a full review on the options can be presented to the membership and a decision on whether to legislate or not can be reviewed at the AGM.

A motion was passed to develop a committee to review legislative options. Christine Briand of Antigonish offered to chair with Connie Vielleus also volunteered.

WCB payments were discussed and direction given to the Board to address concerns with WCB.

Focus in the Field:

African Touch:

Formal therapeutic massage training for the blind and the poor in Nairobi, Kenya.

Peggy Bereza, RMT

In April 2004 Yvonne Poulin, RMT became the recipient of a Humanitarian Award from the Society for Relief of World Poverty (SRWP). SRWP assists individuals and organizations who seek to relieve poverty by providing assistance in the areas of health, economic development, life skill training, academic or technical education, and food supply to people in need.

Yvonne Poulin is a Registered Massage Therapist, a 1988 graduate of WCCMT, and the founder of African Touch, a community based organization founded in Kenya. In 2004 Yvonne set up a massage clinic in Nairobi and conducted a pilot massage therapy training project with four students. She works in Victoria part of the year and spends the rest in Africa organizing the African Touch Massage Academy Project.

The Massage Academy Project is a meaningful and enjoyable way for me to make a positive difference in the world.

What is the African Touch Massage Academy Project?

The African Touch (AT) provides formal education and encourages

self-sufficiency amongst the disadvantaged population of Africa. Its objective is to provide low cost professional training to youth in Kenya in Therapeutic Massage. Thirty candidates for training will be selected from the blind community of Nairobi as well as through various organizations working in the residential slum of Kibera. We offer a 4-month training course in therapeutic massage including HIV/AIDS and standard first aid. This will be followed by a 6-month career development support and a job placement phase.

You've been working on this project for quite some time; why are you doing what you are doing?

Well, a few years ago I reached a point where it became quite clear to me that life is short and the world is crazy? I realized how important it is to make an impact now. The Massage Academy Project is a meaningful and enjoyable way for me to make a positive difference in the world.

How far has the project developed since its inception?

To date we have accomplished the following:

While in Africa....

I managed to get an investors work visa; established official registration as a community based organization in Kenya; developed a successful private practice; completed an apprenticeship training program; and

created connections and networking with various medical personnel as well as with the Kenya Institute for the Blind, the Kenya Performing Arts Group and the Nairobi Rehabilitation Centre.

While in Victoria...

Became officially registered as a non-profit organization set up for the purpose of fund-raising; attained media coverage for the AT; and created a study group to develop the curriculum for the Massage Academy Project.

Ongoing work includes volunteer recruitment and fund-raising.

the toughest part has been living ... without another RMT to share the burdens and the triumphs.

Some days I feel like a lone pioneer in rugged terrain.

Who is involved in assisting you with this project?

I have a great group of board members both in Victoria and in Nairobi. I have corporate sponsorship from a group called WCG International, as well as a study group comprised of 15 RMTs. The WCCMT - Victoria has donated

Focus in the Field, cont.

African Touch

space and equipment and the OVCMT has provided the opportunity to present this project to their current students.

Where are you hoping to get your funding from?

I am following a multi-level sourcing strategy and expecting that the larger donations will come from international sources such as the Canadian International Development Agency. I will also approach wealthy individuals such as David Foster, Oprah and Bono (laughs). I'm laughing but I am not kidding. Other funding sources are through local Rotary clubs, smaller foundations, corporate sponsorship, grants and an RMT campaign (This ran in 2006 in BC. Ed.)

When do you hope for the Massage Academy Project to take place?

We plan to begin in September 2006 in Nairobi. There will be a 3-month implementation phase, a 4-month education period and then a 6-month follow up period. Just over one year from start to finish.

Where next?

The idea behind the mobile training project is that we set up in an area that has not only the need for formal education but a large enough consumer base. Future locations are projected in Kampala, Uganda, Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania and Mombasa, Kenya. Eventually I would love to see this become a project that is carried on wherever there is a need

and a demand in developing nations worldwide.



What has been the most rewarding aspect of the African Touch?

Seeing a complete transformation in my apprentice, Dorothy's, life. When we first met in 2003 she was living in a crowded and impoverished family situation. Now she has taken over my massage practice in Nairobi and is earning an income four times over the poverty level. She has moved out on her own and is completely self-sufficient; she has the basic material goods and skills, which will last her a lifetime. It's amazing.

What has been the most difficult?

There have been endless challenges but the toughest part has been living in Nairobi without another RMT to share the burdens and the triumphs. Some days I feel like a lone pioneer in rugged terrain. I guess that is why this RMT campaign is so important to me.

(The RMT campaign referred to ran in Dec. 05 in BC and raised \$4064. for African Touch. ed)

For more information go to:
www.africantouch.org

Peggy Bereza, RMT practices in Victoria, BC, and is a director of the African Touch Educational Society.

Update:

Yvonne has just been granted residence status in Kenya. This shows her commitment to the African Touch project making it more appealing to potential funders. She first went to Africa in 2003 and was the first massage therapist to volunteer in an alternative treatment centre in Eastern Tanzania with the Hands Across the Border Society.

www.handssacrossthebordersociety.org

Epsom Salt Baths: How & Why they feel so good...

Alexandra Lynch BA RMT

Epsom salt baths have long been suggested as hydrotherapy homecare for clients after massage treatment but how much do we actually know about the magic salt? This article will hopefully fill in some of the blanks and give you a better understanding of what, why and when to fill the bath and soak in the crystalline compound.

Epsom salt, named after one of the earliest discoveries of it in Epsom, England in the early 1600's, is also known by its chemical name, magnesium sulfate. Originally boiled down from the waters at Epsom, it is now prepared from minerals such as epsomite. It has an appearance that is similar to table salt but a chemical composition that is completely different.

Magnesium, the major component in Epsom salt, is the second most plentiful element in human cells and the fourth most significant cation in the body. It is essential in regulating the coenzymes needed in protein and carbohydrate metabolism and plays an essential role in orchestrating bodily functions such as neuromuscular activity, myocardial control and the elimination of waste products.

Magnesium also modulates the electrical potential across cell membranes, which allows nutrients to pass back and forth. It helps in the release of energy by transferring the key phosphate molecule to adenosine triphosphate (ATP), which is important in glycolysis. More than half of magnesium is found in the skeleton with the remainder found intracellularly.

Sulfate, the other component of Epsom salt, is needed for the formation of brain tissue, joint proteins and mucin, the glycoprotein that is needed in the digestive and respiratory tract.

Research has shown that sulfates also stimulate the pancreatic enzymes needed in digestion and assist in detoxifying the body's residue of medicinal and environmental contaminants. Proper levels of sulfate are important in the flushing of waste products from the body as well as absorption of nutrients needed for tissue health. So it becomes clear that Epsom salt has wide ranging roles in the proper functioning of the human body.

Let's look specifically at the effects and benefits of magnesium. Magnesium levels are normally carefully regulated by the body and dietary deficiencies can usually be

“sulfates... stimulate the pancreatic enzymes needed in digestion and assist in detoxifying the body...”

made up by taking 'loans' from bone tissue (e.g. alcoholism, vomiting, diarrhea, diuretics, protein malnutrition can result in the need to borrow from other areas). Depletion can lead to weakness, mental disorder, weaken muscle function, GI disorders and because magnesium, in myocardial tissue

exchanges more easily than in skeletal tissue, it has been suggested that long term deficiency can result in cardiovascular disease.^{1/2} As an electrolyte, it helps ensure proper neuromuscular function and, as an essential element in metabolism, is needed to facilitate over 300 enzyme reactions. Some of these reactions are vital to the effectiveness of insulin (helping to reduce the severity and risk of diabetes), the inflammatory response (helping to relieve pain and muscle spasm), and have possible involvement in migraine headaches, asthma³ and fibromyalgia. It indirectly affects the electrical current in the body as one of the mediators of calcium levels in the blood. Finally, it seems to have a part in the binding qualities of serotonin, the mood altering hormone believed to reduce the parasympathetic or 'fight or flight' response. By offsetting the adrenaline generated by stress, magnesium cations can help regulate the electrical impulses that cause those feelings of anxiety and tension.

But are we getting enough of it? Why should we recommend bathing in it? American studies have shown that both men and women are 'getting by' with anywhere from 70-80% of the recommended daily doses (RDA) of magnesium. Health Canada reports that the RDA for average Canadians is between 250mg (females) and 300mg (males) with the actual intake in the 200-340mg zone.⁴ So we are not doing too badly but all the statistics show that there has been a steady decrease in the levels over the past century. Magnesium can be taken as an oral supplement but a variety of factors

Epsom Salt Baths, cont.

can interfere with its absorption such as interactions with other foods or drugs, certain medical conditions (e.g. Renal disease), or the balance of digestive acids in the stomach. Sulfate is difficult to absorb from food but is readily taken in through the pores of the skin. The answer to the dilemma of how to supplement the body's need for magnesium and sulfate is to soak in it and thus the Epsom salt bath.

The instructions for the bath are similar no matter what source you consult. Recent research at the School of Biosciences in Birmingham, England suggests that magnesium sulfate is absorbed through the skin starting at a one percent solution. An average bath tub with a man in it holds approximately 60 litres (240cups) of water so that would mean a minimum of 2.5 cups of Epsom salt are necessary for the bath to be therapeutic. It would seem reasonable then that most

“proper levels of sulfate are important in the flushing of waste products”

instructions for a bath refer to 1-3 cups of salt in a tub of warm to very warm water, with the Epsom salt amount being determined by the size of the individual. It is important to note that any excess magnesium will be excreted by the kidneys so over dosing is unlikely in healthy individuals.

Water temperature, also varies in instructions but magnesium sulfate

dissolves in water at 20° C so a bath of moderate temperature is sufficient but water 50-55° C increases the effect. Anywhere from 12-20 minutes soak time is considered optimal as it takes at least this much time for the human body to begin to absorb the electrolyte through the skin pores. There is no clear evidence on whether using additives has any negative effect on the therapeutic benefit of Epsom salt but many suggest essential oils such as eucalyptus (for colds and flu) or lavender oil (for stress and tension) can enhance the effects. Drinking fluid during and after the bath is advantageous as people will sweat and replacement of liquid is necessary to maintain a homeostatic balance.

For most healthy individuals, an Epsom salt bath 1-3 times a week is not harmful and can result in a variety of benefits as outlined above. There are however contraindications and precautions for some individuals. Those with heart problems or high blood pressure should be careful not necessarily due to the magnesium sulfate but more the increased water temperatures (particularly over the torso and heart area). Individuals with renal problems also need to be aware of the increased demand placed on the kidneys due to the sweating and increased water intake that is required post bath. During pregnancy, electrolyte, hormone, mineral and nutrient levels are fluctuating so Epsom salt baths are recommended with caution (decreasing the amount of salt and water temperature). However any individual who has a medical condition that may be affected by

magnesium or temperature change should check with their physician before undertaking a new regime.

Much has been explained now when it comes to the marvel of Epsom salt. This white crystalline solid has had a long and varied history with a multitude of effects and benefits. From cows refusing to drink it in the 17th century to use in restoring lava lamps to making pastes to dehydrate carbuncles and boils, from floatation therapy to autism treatment to acne cures, Epsom salts have found a place in our cupboards and lives. Next time you take or suggest this hydrotherapy treatment you will know just a bit more. As a final tip for the ecologically minded, you can take the water from a cooled Epsom salt bath and water your plants...it will make them bushier, greener and produce more flowers.

Alexandra is a practicing massage therapist in Halifax.

(Endnotes)

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All Wired Up and Ready to Go...

A review of Island Software's "Message Office"*

Recent headlines claimed that Canadian doctors are slow to embrace electronic health records. This, the report claimed, is contributing to rising health care costs and wait times. Patients would be better cared for if Canadian hospitals and doctors' offices stopped relying on charts and begin using electronic health records. E-health can improve patient care, and save physicians time says the Centre for Health Services and Policy Research at the University of British Columbia.

While many massage therapy offices have computers on-site, they are often used for general purposes, e-billing Blue Cross, word processing and accounting. Appointment books predominate though a few use on-line scheduling services. None that I know of are using E-health records.

E-health record keeping is not new. It is simply the using electronic means to record patient notes and information. This has the advantage of saving paper, storage space, and the information can be seamlessly integrated for report writing, etc, as well as everyone is able to read the notes. The advantage of being able to track clients visits, purchase of product and referrals they send you is that there is less chance for information to be lost, an accurate accounting of treatments as well as other relevant information is all in one place. Programs that spas and salons have used for years include many of these business features allowing for improved follow-ups for marketing and promotions.

Contact management software is available and programs like Maximizer or NetSuite allow client information to be tracked as well as scheduling follow up calls and notes about that clients needs. Maximizer can also be integrated with some accounting programs. These are very sales based programs and while excellent for sales they don't necessarily address the needs of the massage therapy practice.

Medical health programs geared to MDs such as Patient Keeper, and Practice Partner are excellent and are geared for the medical practice and are priced well beyond the range of most massage therapy practices. Features like ICD9 codes and medical library are excellent but much of the information, are extraneous for the massage therapist.

I then became aware of a program from Island Software titled, Message Office. They have been developing these products since 1995. The developers run a wellness centre and work with their own software on a daily basis. There is a Standard and a Professional version of Message Office and both include all the elements needed to track clients, schedule and keep client records electronically. The information is encrypted and thus secure. Both versions include a template for SOAP notes, and includes an anatomical library. Client tracking, marketing templates, a mailing label function, back-up and restore functions as well as a word processor are included. The Pro version also allows one to upload photos into

their library files, has accounting and scheduling features that allow for multi therapist offices.

In reviewing the free trial copy I found this program to be easy to navigate and fairly intuitive in design. The essentials are all there and the software is undoubtedly written for massage therapy and not some other industry and then reworked. The SOAP note taking system allows one to use different colours to indicate areas of tension or create a custom key, great for the visual user. There is an extensive list of report generators that will facilitate reporting to other health professionals or insurance adjustors. The insurance form, HCFA 1500, while helpful in the US, is not applicable in Nova Scotia. Some of the features, such as the product/inventory management would not be relevant in my practice but for a clinic with a retail component it would be an excellent feature. It appears to be easy to make a mailing list for those Christmas cards or reminders from the database.

There are other programs available, i.e., message manager, or customer pro file, but Message Office was easy to use with minimal learning. It is imperative that whatever products we choose that one look at the needs of the clinic and what you want the software to do. Then a good and informed choice can be made.

For more information:
www.islandsoftwareco.com

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Important Changes to MTANS Health Coverage

Your Board has been in ongoing communication with Blue Cross, the supplier of the MTANS Health Plan because the use of the massage component of the coverage has been overwhelming and beyond Blue Cross' experience.

MT generally accounts for 2.5 - 3% of their total claims. For us, it accounts for 58%. This is unheard of in a world where prescription drug claims usually exceed MT claims 20:1.

As a result of this high usage, Blue Cross performed an audit which indicated misuse by our members. The audit found that close to 20% of claims submitted have been to cover services provided to immediate family members, even though the contract stated that services provided to family members are not eligible. As well, most of our plan members have already used the annual benefit on a program that began August of 2006.

As you can imagine, this has forced changes to the plan. Blue Cross does not dispute the clinical value of MT however they are taking these measures to save the rest of our Health Plan coverage. Therefore,

A) As of June 1st, MASSAGE THERAPY WILL NO LONGER BE COVERED UNDER OUR PLAN.

The rest of the plan will remain unaffected.

B) As early as August 2007, MONTHLY FEES FOR THE HEALTH PLAN WILL BE INCREASED BY 23% (or more if we don't agree to waive 30 day notice) to ensure continued coverage for our members.

The Board will be continuing their discussions with Blue Cross on this issue, working on your behalf to negotiate the best possible result for all.

Wanda Candolini
President
MTANS Board of Directors

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