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## **ABMP Survey Highlights Trends in Massage Therapy**

By Rebecca J. Razo

In late February, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals (ABMP) announced the results of its national survey regarding consumer use of and sentiments toward massage therapy. Harstad Strategic Research, Inc., a national public opinion research firm in Boulder, Colo., conducted the telephone survey on behalf of ABMP, which included a representative sample of over 1,000 adults, ages 21 and older.

Among the key results, the survey found that 12 percent of respondents had received massage an average of nine times in the year 2004 - a frequency on par with their visits to chiropractors and physical therapists. Of those respondents who had received massage in 2004, 96 percent had favorable feelings toward massage therapists, compared to 72 percent of previous massage users and 32 percent of those who had never experienced massage therapy.

The survey also found that a 45 percent plurality indicated their feelings toward massage therapists have changed for the better over the past 10 years. Forty-five percent of those who received a massage in 2004 did so for pain relief or muscle soreness, followed by relaxation and stress relief.

Although massage therapy received high marks from those who have previously experienced it, other survey results indicated that consumers might still lack some basic information on the benefits of massage, especially among those who haven't experienced it firsthand.

For example, of those who did not receive a massage in 2004, 53 percent reported they did not find it "necessary" or there was no "perceived value in receiving one." Thirty-eight percent of this same group said they "probably" would not have a massage in 2005, while 33 percent said they "definitely" would not, compared to 62 percent of those who received massage in 2004 that said they "definitely will" have a massage in 2005.

If "experiencing a massage therapy session is its own best advertising for changing perceptions," as ABMP President Bob Benson said in a press release, massage therapists might be well-served to focus a substantial portion of their education efforts on those who have never experienced the benefits of massage and bodywork.

"Whether massage therapists are speaking to a large audience or one-on-one to potential clients, it is important to emphasize the benefits of massage," says Colleen (Steigerwald) Holloway, author of the *Success Beyond Work*, a marketing book and consulting business designed to help massage therapists increase clientele and revenue. "People are interested in hearing what problem you can solve for them and will be more inclined to use your services if you name their specific problem. Uneducated people think of massage only as a tool for relaxation. By telling people that it is useful in treating migraines, chronic shoulder and neck pain, and so forth, you are providing them a solution to what ails them."

### **Other Surveys**

Other recent consumer massage surveys include the American Massage Therapy Association (AMTA) 2004 Massage Therapy Consumer Survey and a 2002 survey developed by the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) and the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) on Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) use among adults in the United States.\* The chart below compares key data from the ABMP, AMTA and NCCAM surveys.

<b>Key Data</b>	<b>CAM Survey</b>	<b>AMTA Survey</b>	<b>ABMP Survey</b>
<b># of survey respondents</b>	31,044 adults (age: 18+) Response rate: 74.3%	1,009 adults (age: 18+)	1,027 adults (Age: 21+)
<b>% that received massage in the prior 12 months</b>	5%	21% in the prior 12 months; 32% in the prior 5 years.	12%
<b>Reasons cited for using massage therapy</b>	703 survey respondents reported the following reasons for seeking massage therapy: Conventional medicine did not help - 33.9% Conventional medicine too expensive - 12.6% Therapy combined with conventional medicine would help - 59.6% Massage suggested by conventional medical professional - 33.4% Thought it would be interesting to try - 44.1%	49% of all respondents have had massage therapy for pain relief. 17% reported they would use regular massage therapy to recover from injury. 20% of respondents said they've discussed massage therapy with their health care provider; 61% indicated their physicians suggested massage therapy.	Of those who had a massage in 2004: 45% had massage for pain relief or muscle soreness, followed by relaxation (35%) and stress relief (19%). Of those who had not had a massage in 2004: 27% reported that massage would likely be most beneficial for stress relief; 37% said they thought massage would be least beneficial for injury.
<b>Other significant results</b>	9.3% of 18,899 respondents reported ever having used massage therapy.	65% of those polled would recommend massage therapy to someone they know.	51% of all respondents reported feeling "very favorable" toward massage therapists.

*Resources*

1. ABMP consumer survey released Feb. 2005. For more information, visit [www.abmp.com](http://www.abmp.com) or contact Leslie A. Young at [leslie@abmp.com](mailto:leslie@abmp.com).
2. AMTA 2004 massage therapy consumer survey. For more information, visit [www.amtamassage.org](http://www.amtamassage.org).
3. Holloway, Colleen. [www.successbeyondwork.com](http://www.successbeyondwork.com).
4. Barnes PM, Powell-Griner E, et al. *Complementary and Alternative Medicine Use Among Adults*:

*United States, 2002.* Advanced Data from Vital and Health Statistics. U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, NCHS. May 27, 2004. No. 343.  
[www.cdc.gov/nchs](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs).

*\*Related stories*

- "Survey Shows CAM Use on the Rise." *Massage Today*, Aug. 2004.  
[www.massagetoday.com/archives/2004/08/01.html](http://www.massagetoday.com/archives/2004/08/01.html).
- "Massage Therapy Awareness Week 'Extremely Successful.'" *Massage Today*, Jan. 2005.  
[www.massagetoday.com/archives/2005/01/02.html](http://www.massagetoday.com/archives/2005/01/02.html).



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