



Massage Today

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Hopeful Views and Empowering News

By Ralph Stephens, BS, LMT, NCTMB

As you read this, the holidays have passed and we are settling into the new year, hopefully with optimism and enthusiasm. Never have the people needed massage more than in these times.

One of the things I am particularly excited about is the potential for seated massage to expand from the relaxation paradigm to the therapeutic paradigm. One example would be the repetitive strain injury known as carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS). This condition is rampant in the workplace and represents a huge untapped market for seated therapists. With proper education, seated, on-site therapists could significantly reduce the pain and suffering of thousands of people. Therapists doing so will be able to make a very good income for their efforts. They won't even need to file insurance claims! Of course, they might be able to if they enjoy that exercise. I've heard that some do.

Carpal tunnel syndrome is a soft tissue injury aggravated by postural distortion. Technically, it is a neural compression condition involving the median nerve at the carpal tunnel (wrist). Almost all of the tissues involved with treating this condition can be addressed in the seated position. Specific massage and stretching techniques can be quite effective in the treatment and (more importantly) prevention of this condition. This is a very expensive injury; some years ago, a study concluded that the average carpal tunnel case cost workers' compensation over \$63,000. Remember that insurance never pays for anything. In the case of workers' comp., the employer pays for it eventually through increased premiums. Wise employers would welcome a way to reduce this expense. On-site massage is often a tax deduction for a company through its wellness program. Seated therapists can easily learn therapeutic techniques for this condition, then approach businesses in a professional manner, representing themselves and their work accurately and honestly. By applying the methods effectively while educating the patients and employers about proper posture and exercise breaks, the individual therapist will rapidly create a successful practice. The word of success will spread, creating a huge market for massage therapists doing seated therapeutic massage. The result will not only benefit workers and employers; it also will increase the demand for massage therapy for

other conditions as well. Let's not participate in the recession. Let's grow!

Heads Up ...

I thought some of you might want a heads-up on this one. The terrorist activities of the past year have resulted in several legislative efforts. One that is quite disturbing is the new proposal by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). The proposal is called "The Model State Emergency Health Powers Act." (MSEHPA). If you would like to read this 40-page document, you can go to www.publichealthlaw.net. It is an easy read: lots of space on the pages and written in language that anyone can understand. This proposed act is to be taken to every state in 2002 and, the CDC hopes, passed by each state's legislature. It will give public health officials and the governor the power to declare "health emergencies." In a health emergency, the state will be under martial law. The discovery of any disease, contagious or not, could trigger a health emergency. The disease may be in plants, animals or humans. In a health emergency the state will be able to require anyone to undergo any medical exam, force anyone to be vaccinated, confiscate or destroy any property, ration food and fuel (among other substances), and if one does not cooperate they will be quarantined. While the state of emergency is only to last 30 to 60 days, the quarantine is indefinite and ruled by emergency judges appointed by the governor. All health care providers and facilities may be forced into service under public health officials, apparently without compensation. The governor and public health officials are given blanket exemption from liability for death or property loss or damage.

A sudden rise in HIV/AIDS cases could easily fit the qualifications to declare a health emergency. In a declared emergency, officials could lock-up, excuse me, quarantine, anyone with a disease or anyone who refuses to be examined, vaccinated or cooperate. This is a very dangerous proposal. If enacted, you can be sure that it will be used.

How it would affect us as professionals is unclear and subject to speculation. As individuals, the effects are very clear and could be devastating to both our health and our businesses, possibly even our lives.

Some might argue that controlling infectious disease or bioterrorism requires such totalitarian powers. I agree that some emergency powers may need to be given to the states, but not nearly as sweeping as this model legislation calls for. One quote from the draft bill asserts: "An infectious disease may, or may not, be transmissible from person to person, animal to person, or insect to person." So a disease is whatever the state says it is. Granting this much power to a state's public health department is unnecessary and unwise.

If the proposed MSEHPA concerns you, you might want to begin talking to your state legislators about it soon. In the current emotional state of our country, this legislation will probably be passed in some form in every state. Hopefully it can be scaled down to protect the rights and freedoms we have fought to maintain for hundreds of years. If we give up our rights and freedoms to protect ourselves from terrorists, the terrorists have won, because one of their goals is to take away our rights and freedoms.

An example to learn from is the recent anthrax outbreaks. Many people were virtually forced to take Cipro because it was the FDA's drug of choice. Look up the side effects of this expensive drug. They are devastating. Weeks later, we learned that common penicillin and doxycycline are just as effective, with less cost and fewer side effects. If they are effective, so are many natural remedies. Bayer wins. The people lose again.

The freedom of choice with regard to individual health care is one of the most basic and essential freedoms we possess. Without health, what good is freedom? Our profession depends on this freedom. If not actively defended, it will be taken away. The good news is, we do live in America, and we can still participate in this decision. Do what you think is right.

Click [here](#) for more information about Ralph Stephens, BS, LMT, NCTMB.



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