



*Massage Today*

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## **It's About Health**

By Ralph Stephens, BS, LMT, NCTMB

What a year 2005 has been - and 2006 should be really interesting. There are several themes I hope to discuss as the year unfolds. I hope my columns stimulate you to think and, ultimately, to act, not just react. By shining the spotlight of this column on topics I consider to be important challenges facing our profession and sharing my views on them, I hope to start discussions that bring about positive change. I do not expect everyone to agree with me. Not only would that be boring, but it would not bring about the debates our profession needs to grow and improve. For too long, the open discussion of various viewpoints has been discouraged and stifled by our professional organizations, whose elite carry on their discussions behind closed doors. *Massage Today* is the only forum in our profession where different ideas can be presented and discussed openly. Hopefully these discussions continue beyond the pages of *Massage Today* and into your lives, practices and associations maybe even into laws and rules.

This year, I shall discuss licensing, research, the new Federation of State Massage Boards, and of course my favorite topics: education, insurance and medical massage. Along the way, I shall provide you with some therapy tips and general health information, including health freedom issues. Keep an open mind and a sharp memory, and take action on whatever you feel passionate about. Get involved. You will get out of this profession what you put into it.

### **Sweet Gone Sour**

In the interest of promoting health, which I feel should be one of the primary goals of the massage profession, I thought I would share some interesting information that has crossed my path lately. Hopefully, it will help you and might help you help your patients.

For those of you trying to be healthy by going sugar-free, be aware that aspartame has now been found to cause cancer in rats, at levels currently approved for humans. Aspartame is the artificial sweetener used to

make diet pop and most commercial sugar-free foods taste sweet. It seems the incidence of malignant tumors, lymphomas and leukemia go up significantly at only 20 milligrams per kilogram of body weight. The United States government says the acceptable rate for humans is 50 mg/kg. Europe only allows 40 mg/kg. You can find the whole story at [www.medicalnewstoday.com/medicalnews.php?newsid=34040#](http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/medicalnews.php?newsid=34040#). The connection seems to be that aspartame turns into formaldehyde, particularly in soda pop, if allowed to get warm. This has been linked to MS-like symptoms in some patients. Now, it appears the cancer connection has been made. So, if you think your government cares about your health and is trying to protect it, think again. The FDA, which I call the "Fools for Drugs Administration," is made up of soon-to-be or former executives of pharmaceutical and agribusiness companies. The only health they are concerned about is the health of the balance sheets of their soon-to-be or former employers. Don't trust them, and don't for one minute think they care a hoot about your health or anyone else's. A former head of the FDA testified before the U.S. Congress that he would not stand by and allow the rapidly growing natural health and supplement movement to negatively impact the sale of pharmaceuticals.

To further demonstrate the lack of care and compassion by your government and mine, I offer the proposed new rules by the EPA which, if enacted, will allow chemical and pesticide testing on children. Yes, that's right, children, but as they point out, testing only will be allowed on certain groups of children. Let's see; those groups are mentally handicapped, orphaned newborns, rejected or abused children, and children not in the United States. See what compassion our bureaucrats have? (For more, see [www.organicconsumers.org/epa6.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/epa6.cfm).)

### **Anyone for Health Freedom?**

On a more positive note, there is a bill in the U.S. House of Representatives that needs the support of all who cherish their health freedom. Hopefully you do. It's the "Health Freedom Protection Act" (H.R. 4282), introduced Nov. 9, 2005. The act specifically will: 1. Stop the FDA from censoring truthful claims about dietary supplements; 2. Stop the FDA from prohibiting the distribution of scientific articles and publications regarding the role of nutrients in protecting against disease; and 3. Address the FTC's violations of the First Amendment by preventing the FTC from trying to control what is communicated about nutrient-disease associations. If you believe in this effort, please write your representatives in Washington, D.C., and request that they become a co-sponsor and vote for the bill

What does this have to do with massage? In my opinion, massage is about health. Massage is an alternative to the sickness care system. Part of the massage therapy exchange should include the sharing of information on health. As alternative providers, we should be resources to our patients on alternative health information and practices. Quality food is one of the major components of a healthy lifestyle. You cannot have health for long without quality nutrition. Access to alternative health and nutritional information is essential.

Remember, massage is an alternative therapy for many conditions. We, as alternative providers, must support freedom of choice in health care and freedom of access to alternative health information. We must do it now, and constantly, or the pharmaceutical/sickness industry will stomp out the alternative health movement. We already are well on the way to being co-opted and controlled by insurance companies and gatekeeper physicians. (For an enlightening look at where your health insurance dollars go, see [www.bolenreport.net/feature\\_articles/feature\\_article017.htm](http://www.bolenreport.net/feature_articles/feature_article017.htm).)

A significant segment of the massage/bodywork profession needs to get over the idea that this profession is nothing more than a trade that smears oil over skin, which anyone can do with little or no training. The "come on, it's just a massage" segment of our profession either needs to take some self-esteem pills or be relegated to a bottom tier of a segmented profession that is clearly defined and strictly restrained. We have the opportunity to become the premier, first-door health care providers in the alternative health movement. Do we have that big of a vision, or not? This really is about the health of the planet and all of humanity, not just a massage or the profession itself. If we do not stake our claim to this potential for our profession soon, a huge opportunity will be lost. We can never accomplish it by modeling the current failed power structure of the sickness care industry, or molding into it.

So much to think about, so little space. Hope your New Year is off to a great start. Best wishes to each of you for a successful, happy year. More in March. Bring your kite.

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



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