



Massage Today

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Put Your Hands on Your Monitor Æ Part 1

By Ralph Stephens, BS, LMT, NCTMB

It's time to set things straight. Schools are a part of the massage industry, but they are not part of the massage profession. The profession is comprised of the hard-working therapists treating the public. Those therapists band together and form associations and organizations to represent themselves. It's the responsibility of practicing therapists, through their organizations, to determine and define the standards of the profession - in particular, the entry-level standards and requirements for the profession.

The primary entry-level requirement is education. Once the profession determines what the educational requirement for entry is, it becomes the opportunity, the job - the duty, no less - of massage schools to provide training programs that meet those requirements, whatever the requirements might be. This is the place of massage schools today; no more, no less. Massage schools are part of the industry of massage. They are no different than table manufacturers or other suppliers, just a bit more regulated. If schools don't want to provide the education defined as necessary by the profession, then they should find some other profession to provide for - maybe truck driving. There is no "right" to be able to run a massage school. Furthermore, massage schools have no right to challenge the decisions of the profession as to how it wants its practitioners trained.

It is a blatant and unethical conflict of interest for schools to get involved with the determination of educational standards. Their primary motive is profit. Our profession is providing schools a golden opportunity to make significant profits as it is. Schools should be grateful for this opportunity and do their job. The profession should rigorously monitor schools. Those schools not meeting the profession's standards should be publicly exposed and their privilege to profit from this profession should be revoked, permanently.

The nature of massage education is rapidly changing. Massage schools used to be started and then run by successful, ethical, practicing, accomplished therapists. Some still are. I bow to them as they struggle to keep the flame burning. This article is not about them. However, the rapidly growing trend is that corporate entities, mostly for-profit career colleges, are buying up or opening massage schools. Often, they are existing career colleges just adding a massage program to their other offerings, like truck driving, accounting, modeling, cosmetology, etc. While they have the right to do business like anyone else, it does not appear they have the interests of our profession or of quality education for our practitioners at heart. Their heart is elsewhere.

The Career College Association, which has more than 250 schools that offer massage programs, has become a huge lobbying force in Washington, D.C., where we have the best politicians money can buy. Through its network, it pumped over 1.8 million into the pockets of members of Congress, especially those on the education committees. The federal government had a standard that all schools receiving federal aid for students had to provide at least 50 percent of their programs in face-to-face classroom settings (classroom hours). This is way too much hassle for career colleges, so against the objections of traditional universities and the inspector general of the Department of Education, they got their bought-off politicians to attach an amendment to the budget bill which dropped the 50 percent rule. Now, any school can legally provide 100 percent of any program without any in-classroom hours. Just like the FDA, the Department of Education has become nothing more than an industry advocate group. Sally L. Stroup, the assistant secretary of education, is the top regulator overseeing higher education and is a former lobbyist for the University of Phoenix, the nation's largest for-profit college, with some 300,000 students. Yes, Phoenix has its own lobbyist.

So, here it comes: The Career College Association and the large corporate chains of massage schools are starting a very well-organized campaign to eliminate the "classroom hours" in massage programs. Since they no longer must provide any classroom hours, why should massage programs? Our profession's classroom hour standard is now in the way of their profit. First, they want to eliminate the "health science and business" classes. Why should we believe they will stop there? They don't care or do not realize that no other health care profession relies so completely on skilled touch as its methodology of delivery. Palpatory literacy cannot be taught effectively at the entry level by telling students to "put your hands on your monitor, touch the red area, that's soleus."

They have developed two strategies to eliminate our classroom hour standard. First, they will claim that a bunch of their schools already are providing massage training by distance learning methods. So, instead of

enforcing the profession's standards, the profession should just drop the standards and let schools do whatever they want, in particular, what they already are doing. They are being quite arrogant about this, whining that the profession has no right to tell the educational community how to train therapists, particularly to require classroom hours instead of whatever is most convenient for school operators. They are even bragging about how many of their schools are getting away with not providing classroom hours. Sure, they are getting away with it. State boards and the NCBTMB do not have the personnel to provide adequate enforcement, and the schools know this. The only way schools will get caught is if honest therapists and students file complaints. So, hey out there, start filing complaints! It's easy. Are all hours being provided "in class?" If not, file a complaint. Students, do not let them bully you or threaten you with not graduating if you file a complaint. Document their threats and call a lawyer and a policeman. You might be able to retire before you go to work.

Their second strategy is to use the Americans With Disabilities Act, claiming that requiring classroom hours discriminates against the handicapped, single parents, the poor, drunks, drug abusers, and whomever else they can think of. This will mean court battles with state boards, the AMTA and NCBTMB. Through our corrupted legal system, one case in some state will become precedent and the classroom hours standard might be thrown out everywhere. This campaign will be coming to your state soon if you have a "classroom hours" standard in your licensing law. Watch for it. We will see soon how "legally defensible" the NCBTMB standards actually are.

The massage profession has indeed emerged. Can we protect the profession from its own industry? Will the profession be able to maintain control of its entry-level standards? Are the corporate educators to become our rulers? Do you care? If not, sit back and watch the show. If you do care, you better get involved, and soon. There will be more next time on why losing classroom hours is such a bad idea, and also a compromise idea that might actually elevate the profession. Stay tuned.

Try This

Harry Waranch, BA, LMT, CNMT, from Palm Coast, Fla., shares this "hot tip" he calls "The Fire Starter." Stand at the side of the patient's hips, in the *tai chi* "horse stance" position. Place the ulnar edge of both your hands on the patient's sacrum, just inferior to the PSIS. Move the hands back and forth across the tissue rapidly to generate warmth in the tissues. Use light to moderate pressure, adjusted to the patient's sensitivity. This can be done directly on the skin, or through draping or light clothing.

Harry uses this with both deep-tissue and energy techniques for either relaxation or therapeutic treatments. He says it combines well with a myofascial rebound maneuver. Harry suggests you try this with your treatments for lower back, sciatica, psoas and hip complaints, or as a prone-position completion technique.

If you have a favorite technique you would like to share, send it to: ralph@ralphstephens.com. Thanks for reading my column. I'll be back in July.

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



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