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The Shoe's On The Other Foot Now

By Ralph Stephens, BS, LMT, NCTMB

What a wonderful week it was, September 19-24, in Albuquerque, N.M. A lot of the major players in our profession were there at the AMTA National Convention. It was their largest attendance ever and, in my opinion, the best overall convention in recent history.

From education, to exhibits, to entertainment, it was a great meeting. My hat is off to the AMTA convention staff and volunteers who put on a first class event.

The ABMP also was there, sponsoring the birth of the Federation of State Massage Therapy Boards. The AMTA and the ABMP were at the same place at the same time. What an interesting week it was. The ABMP was supporting regulation and the AMTA was warning against it. What a switch. The same arguments used against the AMTA and National Certification such as, "this is happening too fast," and "not all the stakeholders are being included," as well as, "only part of the truth is being told" were suddenly coming from the AMTA and National Certification. How about that?

The shoe is on the other foot now. This is a huge sea change in our profession. It's going to be fascinating to watch as it unfolds. It will affect us all, for better or for worse. Because every silver lining has its cloud, the Federation could become a savior or a monster, so it needs to be watched carefully. However, I have a great deal of optimism about the formation of this regulatory forum. I hope the profession as a whole supports the Federation of State Regulatory Boards and allows them to bring about more standardization, portability and accountability in the regulation of massage therapy.

The homework has been done. Most other regulated professions, such as physical therapy, chiropractic, social work, etc., have such federations for their state boards to communicate through. In organizing this entity for massage boards, other similar organizations were closely studied. Several were visited, observed and interviewed. The best features of most other federations were taken and a consultant/lawyer for several

other federations was retained as an advisor. Therefore, the creation of the massage Federation quickly was achieved, built from a solid foundation, based on what has worked for others, skillfully and carefully adapted to best benefit our uniqueness. This organization is off to a great start with enthusiastic, skilled and dedicated people at the helm. It needs and deserves the support of the entire profession for it to reach its positive potential. It's my hope that all the stakeholders will come together and support the Federation for the good of the profession. Sadly, however, the "good of the profession" usually is based on the cash flow of the affected. Time will tell.

Promoting "Bird Flu"

The media already has begun hitting the public with its annual dose of hyped flu propaganda. They are trotting out doctors and so called experts who warn of millions of deaths from a new form of "bird flu" on prime time network news. They are predicting this year's flu epidemic to be the worst ever. Let's see, they predicted that last year too, but then they ran out of vaccine because a major manufacturer of flu vaccine in England was found to be contaminated with a dangerous bacteria. The company, Chiron, had to pull its vaccine off the market. With not nearly enough vaccine, there was no epidemic. How could that have happened? Actually it was a mild flu year compared to most. Gee, less vaccine equals less flu. Hmmm.

The "flu salesmen" doctors from the pharmaceutical media and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) multiply the danger and risk of viruses because, without exaggerated stories, flu vaccines just would not sell because the flu virus is not all that dangerous in and of itself. Actually, exercise probably provides more protection from the flu than vaccine. In fact, Jeffrey A. Woods, PhD., and graduate student Tom Lowder at the Physical Fitness Laboratory, Department of Kinesiology, University of Illinois, Urbana, recently reported that four consecutive days of moderate exercise in mice after they were infected with influenza protected them from dying, compared with mice that didn't exercise.

Woods and Lowder reported their findings at the American Physiological Society's 2004 Intersociety Meeting, showing that 20-week-old mice that had exercised had significantly ($p=0.008$) higher survival rates (18 of 22) versus HCC of the same age (10 of 22). When all EX mice (47) were compared with all HCC mice (48), EX had twice the survival rate, 59% vs. 29.4% ($p=0.003$). They reported that none of the variables (food/water intake, random activity or symptom severity) proved to be reliable at predicting mortality. But exercise did.

To bad the CDC just can't bring itself to suggest that patients regularly exercise, eat right and get massage (proven to boost immune system function) instead of promoting vaccines that contain dangerous chemicals. Now they recommend babies get flu shots. There have been no safety studies done regarding vaccines administered to infants. Of course not, just like there have been no safety studies on putting fluoride in drinking water. They dare not, for they know what the results would be.

Interestingly enough, the CDC admits that of the 135 children who died during the 2003-2004 flu season, 59 had received flu shots. Not a very impressive statistic for flu shots. So, think about it and do what you believe in. I'll be exercising, getting massage, eating well, taking a few herbs and some homeopathy, and I'll be flu free. Hope you will be too, whatever you do.

Happy Holidays

This is my 40th column for Massage Today and the last one in 2005. I want to thank you for reading this column, and for your support, input, encouragement and even the occasional criticisms. I also thank the staff at Massage Today for having me. I look forward to continuing our dialogue in 2006.

The Holiday Season is nearly upon us. I saw the first decorations Labor Day weekend. In the midst of all the consumption, try to find some time to remember and ponder the true significance of this season. Almost every major tradition has one of its big days during this time. That is not by accident. Take some time for your Spirit as well as your body. And take some time to count your blessings and be thankful for all you have, as well as for the privilege of being able to serve your fellow human beings through the power of touch. May you have a blessed and joyous Holiday Season and a prosperous New Year!

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