



Health Awareness

The Deep-Down Benefits Of Massage Therapy

(NAPSA)—Over the past few years, massage therapy has gained a healthy following of patients and doctors. The treatment—which many once considered only to be for the wealthy—is being used more frequently for treating muscular and arthritic conditions, sports injuries and chronic pain.

In fact, the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage & Bodywork (NCBTMB) estimates 20 million Americans spend between \$2 and \$4 billion annually on visits to massage and bodywork practitioners, totaling approximately 75 million visits each year. Treatment benefits include physical relaxation, reduced anxiety, increased circulation and pain relief.

Many of today's seniors use massage therapy to treat ailments such as arthritis and muscle aches, that are associated with growing older. The therapy has also been shown to be beneficial to pregnant women. Pregnant massage:

- Helps relieve depression, anxiety and nervousness caused by hormonal change.
- Helps increase circulation, which reduces swelling and improves oxygen supply to the baby.
- Helps relieve muscular discomfort such as cramping, tightening, stiffness and knots.

- About 15 percent of U.S. community hospitals offer alternative or complementary therapies such as massage.
- The National Institutes of Health reports one-third of U.S. consumers polled said they visit an alternative medicine specialist once a year.
- As many as 40 percent of Americans said they have tried some sort of "alternative" treatment.
- There are more than 60,000 NCBTMB-certified Massage Therapists in the U.S.



Why the newfound acceptance for a practice that's been around for hundreds of years? Many therapists attribute massage's current popularity to increased public knowledge.

For instance, more people today are aware of the health risks associated with stress than in the past and massage therapy has been shown to relieve stress and many of the negative aspects associated with it.

Other treatment methods such as acupuncture and herbal medicine have grown in popularity as well. In fact, the National Institutes of Health reports one-third

of U.S. consumers polled said they visit an alternative medicine specialist once a year.

As alternative medicines grow in popularity, more and more health plans are covering massage therapy and bodywork services. A recent survey showed 15 percent of HMOs offer massage in their coverage.

Health plans that do cover massage, often look to work with therapists who have been certified by groups such as the NCBTMB.

The NCBTMB is an independent group founded to foster high standards for therapeutic massage and bodywork. The group's actions (and those of groups like it) have helped many alternative medicines gain legitimacy in the eyes of healthcare professionals and insurance companies.

It's also recommended consumers look for massage therapists or bodywork practitioners who have been certified by such programs—that way people can be more confident that their chosen therapist is competent, well-trained and has the appropriate knowledge and skills to treat conditions.

Consumers can find certified massage therapists in their area or learn more about NCBTMB at the Web site www.ncbtmb.com.