



CANADIAN MASSAGE & MANUAL OSTEOPATHIC THERAPISTS ASSOCIATION

Scope of Practice

For Massage Therapists and/or Spa Therapists

Authorized Activities within Professional Practice

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PREFACE

Definition

A scope of practice highlights the professional activities permissible by respective legislation and/or education skills and training certifications. It provides an external boundary within which graduates of the profession work.

Introduction

This Scope of Practice document is developed for Massage Therapists and/or Spa Therapists with the basic level of training and certification. It is to be used in conjunction with the CMMOTA Standards of Practice for Massage Therapist and/or Spa Therapists and the CMMOTA Code of Ethics for quality assurance in the practice of Massage Therapy. The authors of this document recognize the overlapping roles between Massage Therapists or Spa Therapists and other Alternative Health Practitioners and therefore have included a list of activities **restricted** under the Alberta Health Professions Act (2000).

A scope of practice statement creates public awareness in the choice of a suitable health care provider for their health care needs. It also assists Massage Therapists or Spa Therapists to distinguish between modalities that lie within their scope of practice and those which do not.

This document does not apply to Registered Massage Therapists (RMT), whose Scope of Practice is established and governed by their respective legislated professional College within a regulated Province or Territory of Canada.

Purpose

The purpose of this Scope of Practice document is to:

- Provide a summary of authorized professional activities for Canadian Massage and Manual Osteopathic Therapist Association (CMMOTA) members registered as massage therapists or spa therapists with the Association;

- Provide new and prospective graduates of Massage Therapy programs entry-to-practice margins;

- Set a framework upon which CMMOTA Massage Therapist Members and Spa Therapist Members can maintain their identity as professionals;

- Encourage sound-logic and evidence-based approaches to guide care provided by a CMMOTA Massage Therapist or Spa Therapist member;

- Provide CMMOTA Massage Therapist and Spa Therapist members a benchmark to maintain good standing with the Association and the Health Insurance Industry;

- Provide CMMOTA a parameter by which to initiate a complaints investigation process and implement a disciplinary action where applicable.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to the Canadian Council for Massage Therapy Schools for provision of the Massage Therapists Pledge and the Federation of Massage Therapy Regulatory Authorities of Canada for the 2016 Entry-to-Practice Inter-Jurisdictional Practice Competencies and Performance Indicators for Massage Therapists which defines the Scope of Intervention for Massage Therapists.

Liability Statement

In addition to this document, Massage Therapist Members and Spa Therapist Members are accountable to all applicable pieces of Federal, Provincial and Municipal legislation, Association Bylaws, Association Policies and Procedures, Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics documents.

GLOSSARY

Capable Scope: the sum knowledge surrounding the treatment or potential treatments for which the therapist has received sufficient training in to allow them to practice the techniques necessary for safe and effective treatment of a physical condition of a client.

Client: The person receiving Massage Treatment from a qualified Massage Therapist or Spa Therapist.

Massage Therapist: An individual that has graduated from an approved and licensed program and has become a registered Full Massage Therapist or Spa Therapist member of the Canadian Massage and Manual Osteopathic Therapist Association (CMMOTA).

Massage Treatment: This is the therapeutic intervention provided by a qualified Full Massage Therapist, Spa Therapist or Massage Therapist in training (Associate Massage Therapist or Student Massage Therapist).

Registered Massage Therapist: An individual that is a member in good standing of the legislated College of Massage Therapy within a Regulated Province or Territory in Canada.

Restricted Activity: An action that is legally impermissible and/or unethical and/or immoral and/or unauthorized for the Associate Massage Therapist, Full Massage Therapist or Spa Therapist to perform on a client due to inadequate training/skills/education and certification.²

Scope: Entry-level activity the Full Massage Therapist or Spa Therapist is trained and certified to competently perform after graduation.³

Summary of Scope of Practice

From a physiological perspective, this is what is permissible for CMMOTA Massage Therapist and Spa Therapist members:

- Any hands-on techniques (that are not protected acts under Canadian Federal or Provincial Legislation) performed under the intent of the CMMOTA Scope of Practice for Massage Therapists and/or Spa Therapists.
- Massage Therapy Modalities as outlined and approved in Appendix 19: Modalities List for Massage Therapists.
- Client education to mitigate pain and improve function by altering tissue loading. For example:
 - ❖ Suggesting that an office worker with low back pain get up and move around periodically throughout their workday;
 - ❖ Educating clients of factors influencing their pain, for better understanding and further take steps toward self-care.

Summary of Restricted Activities

This scope of practice restricts CMMOTA Massage Therapist or Spa Therapist members from performing the following activities:

1. Prescribing/administering medications.
2. Providing diagnoses.
3. Puncture of the dermis.
4. Performing all forms of psychotherapy.
5. Performing restricted activities and modalities NOT approved or defined as Massage Therapy in accordance with *Appendix 19: Modalities List for Massage Therapists* and billing them under Massage Therapy.
6. Commenting and reporting on areas outside of massage therapy including but not limited to client's mental, social, financial and nutritional health except ONLY when the client **asks** for a referral.
7. Inserting body parts or equipment into the anus, vagina, or urethra
8. Massage of the nipple, areola, penis, testicles, vulva, or perinium.
9. Initiation or pursuit of personal romantic relationship(s) with client(s) within twelve months of the last treatment with the therapist.

1. Client Interaction

Scope

The Massage Therapist or Spa Therapist:

- Communicates professionally with the client
- Applies principles of beneficence and non-maleficence when working with clients
- Respects the client's right to refuse treatment
- Treats all clients fairly and impartially
- Maintains privacy and confidentiality of client information
- Provides the client with all the options pertaining to the treatment session, including the potential benefits and side effects
- Invites the client to attend treatment sessions
- Creates a safe environment for the client to fully disclose their health history
- Seeks informed consent from the client before performing any activity within this scope of practice document
- Seeks written informed consent for treatment of any sensitive areas (as defined in the CMMOTA *Treatment of Sensitive Areas Policy*) before performing any activity within this scope of practice document
- When required by law reports to relevant authority, or encourages reporting, when there is evidence and admission of abuse on a client
- Reasonably charges the client for services rendered
- Retains the right to refuse to provide treatment if safety of the client and/or the therapist is perceived to be compromised
- Discloses to the client their level of training/certification and licensure
- Regarding Animals in Clinic Space - follows guidelines as set out by Alberta Health Services <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/healthinfo/ipc/if-hp-ipc-animals-hcf.pdf>

Restricted Activities

The Massage Therapist or Spa Therapist shall not:

1. Refer to themselves as any other protected title under any provincial or federal legislation in the jurisdiction in which they are practicing; or
2. Encourage, initiate, or maintain a sexually intimate relationship with an existing client; except when legally married or in a common law relationship; or
3. Encourage, initiate, or maintain a sexually intimate relationship with a former client within a twelve-month period following the end of the therapeutic relationship; or
4. Encourage, initiate, or maintain behavior of non-therapeutic nature; or
5. Misrepresent their qualifications to members of the public.

Termination or Refusal of Treatment

The Massage Therapist or Spa Therapist may refuse or terminate treatment where:

1. The therapist believes that the condition of the client requires treatment that is beyond the therapist's capable scope; or
2. The Safety of the client is perceived to be compromised; or
3. The Safety of the therapist is perceived to be compromised; or
4. Sexual harassment has been perceived to occur before or during a treatment session; or
5. The client refuses to follow proper draping procedures; or
6. The client refuses to pay for treatment or for previously missed or cancelled appointments.

Where treatment has been refused or terminated the therapist **must** document within the client's treatment chart the date of the refusal of treatment, the reason, or reasons why the treatment was stopped or refused in detail.

Where there have been serious breaches of professional boundaries by a client, which include sexual harassment in the form of inappropriate physical contact or sexually suggestive behaviour or sexually suggest remarks or requests for sexual services, the therapist is encouraged to document such within the treatment chart, and to report the incident to their supervisor, employer, clinic owner, the Association, and the respective police authority within the jurisdiction where the incident took place.

2. Technical Skills

Scope

The Massage Therapist or Spa Therapist,

- Performs full body physical examinations, assessments and re-evaluations on clients as per the Standards of Practice document⁴
- Partners with the client to develop an appropriate treatment plan
- Implements treatment techniques as outlined in the Standards of Practice Document⁴ and the Inter-Jurisdictional Practice Competencies and Performance Indicator for Entry-to-Practice Massage Therapists¹ and as outlined in *Appendix 19: Modalities for Massage Therapists*
- Effectively manages time in the workplace
- Provides a progress report when requested
- Refers the client out to more experienced professionals when the complexity of the client care exceeds their expertise or when there is a high risk of a negative outcome in response to a therapeutic intervention or whenever is suitable⁴

Restricted Activities

The Massage Therapist or Spa Therapist shall not:

1. Perform any activity restricted in any Health Professions Act or other applicable legislation in the jurisdiction in which they are practicing;
2. Perform treatment on a client without seeking and obtaining informed consent;
3. Perform treatment on a sensitive area on a client without seeking and obtaining informed written consent;
4. Perform a therapeutic intervention to intentionally harm the client;
5. Perform High Velocity Low Amplitude Thrusts on a client;
6. Diagnose a condition presented by a client;
7. Issue a requisition to a client for a diagnostic test;
8. Perform a technique on a client without having the skill, education, training and certification;
9. Puncture the dermis of the client in the course of treatment;
10. Perform intra-anal, intra-penile and/or intra-vaginal treatments on a client.

3. Research

Scope

The Massage Therapist or Spa Therapist,

- Performs research activities limited to the Standards of Practice, Code of Ethics and Scope of Practice Documents
- Employs ethical, morally sound and lawful methods of recruiting participants
- Seeks and obtains informed consent from every participant in the study
- Accurately reports/documents the findings and any other data relevant to the research
- Avoids plagiarism
- Cites referenced sources accurately and comprehensively

Restricted Activities

The Massage Therapist or Spa Therapist shall not perform any unethical and/or illegal research methods.

4. Teaching and Mentorship

Scope

The Massage Therapist or Spa Therapist:

- Educates when they show evidence of competence in Massage Therapy Skills
- As an Educator meets the Educator requirements as listed by the relevant employment organization and in absence of that, the Provincial Ministry of Private Vocational Training/ Advanced Education Department
- Mentors other massage therapists or spa therapists within the boundaries of the Standards of Practice, Scope of Practice and Code of Ethics documents
- Shall only teach modalities and techniques that are within scope for massage therapists or spa therapists, unless the educator has adequate certification through an association that governs the out-of-scope modality that is being taught.
- Outside of those enrolled as students of massage therapy or those who are already registered as a Massage Therapist, shall only teach massage modalities and techniques that fall within the scope of practice for the professional designation of the trainee.

Restricted Activities

The Massage Therapist or Spa Therapist:

- Shall not teach and/or mentor student therapists in activities outside of their training, qualifications, skills, and certifications.
- Shall not teach modalities and techniques to Massage Therapists or those training to become Massage Therapists that are not within scope for the profession unless the course material content and course advertising clearly state that the modalities and techniques being taught are out of scope for Massage Therapists.
- Shall not teach massage therapy modalities and techniques to a trainee that fall outside of the scope of practice of a professional designation of the trainee unless such training is provided as part of a recognized massage training program.

5. Leadership and Resource Management

Scope

The Massage Therapist or Spa Therapist:

- Performs cost-benefit analyses of their health care business and service to clients
- Applies quality assurance and quality control measures in the provision of services to the client including but not limited to therapeutic interventions and administrative tasks
- Monitors resource provision to clients
- Fairly allocates resources such as time, finances and intellectual wealth to clients and staff
- Prioritizes and budgets for task completion

Restricted Activities

The Massage Therapist or Spa Therapist shall:

1. Comply with any Provincial and Federal Government legislations, Human Rights Commissions and Labor laws regarding health and safety and employment standards;
2. Provide a workplace free of verbal or conduct harassment or discrimination due to disability, sexual orientation, gender, race, religion, country of origin, ethnic descent, family, appearance, color, age, criminal history, medical history, marital status etc.

REFERENCES

1. Federation of Massage Therapy Regulatory Authorities of Canada. 2016. Inter-Jurisdictional Practice Competencies and Performance Indicators for Massage Therapists at Entry-to-Practice.
2. Alberta Queen's Printer. 2000. Province of Alberta, Health Professions Act. Revised Statutes of Alberta (Chapter H-7).
3. College of Registered Nurses of Manitoba and College of Registered Psychiatric Nurses of Manitoba. 2010. Understanding Scope of Practice for Licensed Practical Nurses Registered Nurses Registered Psychiatric Nurses in the Province of Manitoba.
4. Canadian Massage and Manual Osteopathic Therapists Association. Standards of Practice for Massage Therapists or Spa Therapists Guidelines for Best Practice, May 2024 Edition.