

We Should Do a Journal: a Brief History of the *IJTMB*

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This editorial tracks progress from informal conversations in 2001 to the fifth anniversary publication of the *International Journal of Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork: Research Education and Practice*, the only open-source, peer-reviewed journal specifically dedicated to the scientific exploration of therapeutic massage practice and education.

KEYWORDS: *IJTMB*; open-source publishing; open journal system; Massage Therapy Foundation

In 1991 the American Massage Therapy Association (AMTA) had the vision to create a new, independent but forever-connected organization, the Massage Therapy Foundation (MTF). The MTF was formed with the mission of advancing the practice of massage therapy by supporting scientific research, education, and community service.

From its inception, the MTF wanted to make good-quality research available to massage therapists. The problem was that articles about massage therapy research could appear in almost any kind of medical journal: nursing, physical therapy, occupational therapy, and general CAM journals all occasionally carried research about massage, but were almost all subscription-based and expensive. Our profession clearly needed a way to access massage therapy research efficiently and without constantly hitting the pay-for-access obstacle. To begin addressing this challenge, the MTF introduced a research database, providing links to relevant open-sourced, peer-reviewed articles through our website. Maintaining the database was problematic, however, and we knew that this wasn't an adequate solution to the problem.

In 2001 Dr. Glenn Hymel and John Balletto, then President of the Massage Therapy Foundation, were in Quebec City at the AMTA annual meeting to present a workshop on using the MTF database. At dinner that night the thought struck them: "We should do our own journal!" An outgrowth of the database committee was formed and charged with gathering data on feasibility, possible management systems, and projected costs for a project like this. One early idea was that the journal could be published in-house and mailed out through the Foundation's contact list.

That seemed possible, but it carried some strong limitations, including high costs, limited staff capacity, and a bar to being indexed in important journal databases. Electronic publishing looked promising, but we lacked the expertise and capacity to do it well. Concrete plans for a journal stalled, but the vision persisted.

Then in 2007 Dr. Hymel attended a meeting about open-source publishing at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, BC. There he found representatives of Multimed Inc., a pioneer in open-source electronic journal publication. The company turned out to be a perfect match with our needs. Finally, after reviewing business plans, outlining ambitious goals, and setting appropriate metrics, the MTF Board of Trustees—under the visionary leadership of President Diana Thompson—voted to approve the organizational structure of the journal, settled on its name, and appointed its first editorial board, which consisted of Dr. Thomas Findley, Editor-in-Chief, Dr. Glenn Hymel, Executive Editor, Dr. Christopher Moyer, Research Section Editor, Dr. Paul Finch, Education Section Editor, and Dr. Karen Boulanger, Practice Section Editor.

The Volume 1, Number 1 edition of the *IJTMB* was published in August of 2008, carrying five editorials and two articles. It wasn't until Volume 3, Number 1 (early 2010) that the Journal presented articles in all three sections. Special recognition and appreciation needs to be given to our earliest authors who published their work in the *IJTMB* before it was widely indexed. That was a true leap of faith, but it paid off. The consistently high standard that the Journal displayed allowed it to be indexed quickly in important international databases including Index Copernicus, Google Scholar, Hinari, Directory of Open Access Journals, CrossRef, Healthindex, Quertle, and—as of 2011 and after only three years of publication history—PubMed Central. For this achievement, which could not have happened without his guidance and drive, Dr. Hymel received the 2011 Distinguished Service Award from American Massage Therapy Association President Glenath Moyle.

The fact that the *IJTMB* has been an open-access journal from its beginning speaks volumes about the role of the Massage Therapy Foundation as a

philanthropic organization, and its commitment to serving the massage therapy community at large. Our sense has always been that information is meant to be shared and that if evidence-informed practice is to become the norm among massage therapists, then that evidence needs to be absolutely as accessible as possible. It was a risky strategy that put the *IJTMB* among the minority of American academic journals, but our decision foresaw the more general movement toward open-access publishing that we experience today.

As an electronic journal, the *IJTMB* doesn't have expenses linked to paper, ink, and postage, but we do invest substantial resources in our editorial board and our Open Journal System host. Unlike many open-access journals, we do not charge authors a fee to submit articles or to be published. We do offer advertising space, but this does little to offset production costs. Consequently, the *IJTMB* is one of the most expensive programs that the Foundation provides. We do it, and will continue to do it, because it is a service that our profession needs. This is demonstrated in the statistics about the Journal's use: in 2008 we had 1,103 registered readers;⁽¹⁾ in 2013 we have 10,397.⁽²⁾ And as research literacy improves and spreads throughout our profession, we expect that those numbers will continue to climb.

This edition celebrates the fifth anniversary of the *International Journal of Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork: Research, Education and Practice*. We have had some turnover since the early days; our editorial team is now composed of Antony Porcino, PhD as Executive Editor, Karen Boulanger, NCTMB, MS, PhD as Editor-in-Chief, Albert Moraska, PhD as Research Section Editor, Whitney Lowe, LMT as Education Section Editor, and Niki Munk, PhD, as Practice Section Editor. Glenn Hymel, EdD, LMT is

our Senior Consulting Editor and Emeritus Founding Executive Editor, and Thomas W. Findlay, MD, PhD, is our Consulting Editor and Emeritus Founding Editor-in-Chief. It was my great honor as the President of the Massage Therapy Foundation to sign the papers that allowed the *IJTMB* to be indexed in Pubmed Central, and now to see it achieve its fifth anniversary. And I am proud to contribute to our profession's only academic, peer-reviewed, open-source journal so that we may always, in the words of Dr. Glenn Hymel, "Look for the unanswered questions, and the unquestioned answers."

CONFLICT OF INTEREST NOTIFICATION

The author declares there are no conflicts of interest.

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