

The Next Frontiers

Antony Porcino, PhD, HSI
Executive Editor, *IJTMB*

*Complementary Medicine Education and Outcomes Research Program, British Columbia Cancer Agency,
Vancouver, BC, Canada*

This issue of the *IJTMB* includes articles that represent the scope of therapeutic massage and bodywork (TMB) practice and education. The two research articles represent the testing of deductive hypotheses not commonly seen in the TMB literature: the change in tactile abnormalities of young children with autism using qigong massage, and changes in postural balance from massage to the muscles associated with the mandibular trigeminal nerve. The education editorial opens the *IJTMB* dialogue on the need, value, and issues of competency-based education relative to hours-based programming.

The broad physiological effects of therapeutic massage and bodywork (TMB), such as altered pain experience and reductions in stress and depression, have been well-documented in TMB research. Because of that and perhaps because they represent fundable, low-hanging research fruit that have value in general health care, significant research efforts continue to test those as outcomes in varied situations where changes in those health parameters are important. However, what I particularly appreciate in this issue's articles is the authors' refreshing variance from these standard massage outcomes. In two articles we read about testing unusual hypotheses in massage research, while the third directs us to newer thinking in massage education.

For Silva & Schalock, qigong massage is applied to young children with autism to treat tactile abnormalities. Grounded in childhood developmental theory, they are applying massage to effectively and positively change tactile response, and thus the developmental trajectory of young children with autism. The results suggest that tactile impairment in these children can be addressed, and the technique may have value in other developmental issues for children where self-regulation issues are involved. It also effectively reduces parental stress due to

reduction of difficult behaviors. Based on this work, there is currently a larger trial underway. I hope this becomes another fruitful field of massage intervention research.

The authors of the second study, Hage *et al.*, explore the theory that the link between the mandibular trigeminal nerve and motor functions suggests that some motor functions may be altered by massage to the mandibular trigeminal nerve muscles. This study reminds us that, even though a study's results may not prove to be statistically or clinically significant, it is important to continue to publish the testing of clinically relevant hypotheses. Through that publication we collectively learn from what has been done, and are directed to other possibilities, aided by these attempts to test theory, research design, or alternative treatments. With ongoing concerns regarding the low rate of publishing negative trial results,⁽¹⁾ I am pleased that the authors chose to publish this article and, specifically, in the *IJTMB*.

Finally, in his editorial, educator Lowe reminds us that no aspect of TMB should be free from re-evaluation and growth, including TMB education. While some jurisdictions and TMB therapy programs are based in competency-based education, in practical terms a dynamic tension continues between classical hours-based programming and competencies-based programming. To develop competency, we still need to put in the time, but what are the implications for education development and delivery? Lowe's editorial highlights these questions. I invite readers to explore and respond to these and the related issues such as the long-term impact on the profession. The *IJTMB* education section is meant to be a forum where educational theory, research, and expertise discourse converge, and where discussion on this and other critical educational questions in the TMB field is encouraged.

Enjoy the December issue of the *IJTMB*.

REFERENCES

1. Fanelli D. Negative results are disappearing from most disciplines and countries. *Scientometrics*. 2012;90(3): 891–904.

Corresponding author: Antony J. Porcino, BSc, PhD, HSI, Complementary Medicine Education and Outcomes Research Program, School of Nursing, University of British Columbia, T291 – 2211 Westbrook Mall, Vancouver, BC, Canada V6T 2B5
E-mail: eeijtmb@gmail.com