



The 2010 Highlighting Massage Therapy in Complementary and Integrative Medicine Research Conference

The Massage Therapy Foundation will host the conference titled “Highlighting Massage Therapy in Complementary and Integrative Medicine Research”, May 13–15, 2010, at the Red Lion Inn in Seattle, Washington. Content will be made available through six keynote presentations, two panel discussions, four experiential workshops, and approximately sixty research presentations and posters with an emphasis on translational research and public health.

The Foundation’s first “Highlighting” conference, in 2005 at Albuquerque, was called by some a “Woodstock experience.” I certainly felt a palpable, infectious joy spreading through a group of like-minded massage enthusiasts, giddy with research.

Although 2005 was only four years ago, the massage profession has made some significant advancements in regard to research since then. Massage therapists seem to be more curious about research, educators are more inclined to quote research data in the classroom, and vendors are more visibly supportive of research with their dollars and in their advertisements. These changes were notable most recently at the American Massage Therapy Association national convention in Orlando in September 2009: the number of attendees at the research track classes was increased from previous years, educators throughout cited research during their presentations, and participation at fundraisers for the Foundation broke previous attendance records.

Massage research has also experienced some growth spurts. In a search of CINAHL and PsycINFO simultaneously, “massage and clinical trials” yielded 595 indexed articles between 2000 and 2004, and 1371 (and counting) between 2005 and 2009. Similarly, on PubMed “complementary and alternative medicine” yielded 325 indexed articles between 2000 and 2004, and 506 between 2005 and 2009. (Searches conducted on August 5 and October 9, 2009, respectively.)

In response to this coming-of-age with regard to research, the planning committee has identified translational research, rather than research literacy (the primary theme for workshops in 2005), as the cornerstone of the upcoming conference. This shift in emphasis to translational research is subtle, yet pivotal. It shows that we are actively engaged in pursuing research data and seeking ways to influence research in return.

Although translational research is typically defined as a linear translation of scientific discoveries to

practical applications, the Roadmap to Medical Research initiatives from the National Institutes of Health is promoting the bench-to-bedside approach as a two-way street. Basic science provides clinicians with new tools for use in the patient population and for impact assessment, and clinical researchers make novel observations about the nature and progression of disease that often stimulate basic scientific investigations (<http://nihroadmap.nih.gov/clinicalresearch/overview-translational.asp>).

One application of translational research as a theme for the “Highlighting” conference was advanced through an exchange between the executive editors of the *International Journal of Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork* and the *Journal of Bodywork and Movement Therapies*, Glenn M. Hymel, EdD, LMT, and Leon Chaitow, DO, ND. What arose is an unconventional mechanism for bringing together research and practice: experiential workshops—that is, practical demonstrations of a variety of methods of manual care, combined with discussions of evidence of efficacy, proposed mechanisms, scientific evidence, and stated needs for future exploration. The intended outcome is to ensure that the bench-to-bedside and bedside-to-bench cycle has an opportunity to come full circle and to influence the full complement of attendees: therapists, researchers, educators, and publishers.

The conference structure consists of morning plenary sessions that will offer two keynote presentations and a panel discussion. Thursday’s topic will be the role of massage and bodywork in public health, launching the conversation where the practitioner lives and breathes—pain management—with keynotes on clinical trials and mechanistic studies addressing chronic low back pain from Dan Cherkin, PhD, and Helene Langevin, MD, PhD. The panel that follows will open a conversation on public health policy, health care integration, and how massage currently addresses issues of public concern—such as wellness and prevention, pain management, emotional health, and lifestyle choices—moderated by William Meeker, DC, MPH.

Friday morning will provide links from research to clinical decision-making with keynotes from Christine Choate, DC, PhD, and Julie Ann Day, PT. The panel on translational research, moderated by Drs. Hymel and Chaitow, will provide a forum to discuss the meaning of evidence-based practice and its implications to the massage and bodywork community.

Each afternoon, experiential workshops and breakout sessions on research will provide attendees with a variety of opportunities. Poster sessions will be stationed in the ballroom where the plenary sessions are being held, with dedicated breaks in the mornings and a wine-and-cheese reception on Friday evening for viewing. Structured networking opportunities will be made available during lunches; and on Saturday, after the closing breakfast and keynotes from Josephine Briggs, MD, PhD, and Whitney Lowe, LMT, on the future of massage research, newcomers and veterans alike are welcomed to stay for an optional luncheon to assist those new to research in integrating the events of the conference into practice.

Compliments of the Fascia Research Congress, excerpts of the October 2009 Amsterdam conference will be available for viewing on the Wednesday evening before the “Highlighting” conference opens.

The 2010 “Highlighting” conference may not have the novelty of Woodstock, but we hope that it will

provide a contemporary and sophisticated venue for sharing massage therapy research perspectives with an equally giddy crowd of massage enthusiasts.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST NOTIFICATION

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest.

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