

Hospital Based Massage Therapy

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(formerly Academic Consortium for Complementary and Alternative Health Care)

BACKGROUND

The American Hospital Association reports massage therapy as the top Complementary and Integrative Medicine service provided in outpatient settings and the second most popular in inpatient settings.

Massage therapy is used to address some of the most common general symptoms that come with a hospital stay including pain, stress, anxiety, and insomnia.

Massage therapy has a long history of being offered in hospital settings and the need for standards was recognized over a hundred years ago. Having competencies for massage therapy is particularly important given massage therapy's increasing popularity in the hospital setting and the fact that this type of practice involves working with medically complex patients.



PURPOSE

In 2012, the Hospital Based Massage Therapy (HBMT) Task Force was formed as part of the Clinical and Education Working groups of the Academic Collaborative for Integrative Health (ACIH) to explore the need for a set of standard competencies for the practice of massage therapy in hospital environments, given that no such standard resource exists.

METHODS

Survey design

An online survey was developed by HBMT task force members and reviewed by ACIH working group members. The survey was designed to begin gathering information about the state of HBMT and was not meant to be a scientific study.

Survey Questions

Survey questions were designed to get a sense of where the hospital placed massage therapy on the continuum of professional patient care and to gather information about the nature of massage therapy services including:

- Hiring requirements
- Employment status
- Educational requirements
- Training or orientation provided
- Populations served
- Volume statistics
- Financial support
- Oversight structures

Survey Administration

The survey was distributed via email link in Mid-May 2013 to a convenience sample of 42 individuals at 37 hospitals known to offer massage therapy services. The survey participants were based on compiling a list of hospitals with massage therapy programs and a call for participation at the International Massage Therapy Research Conference.

Timeline

- 2012** Hospital Based Massage Therapy Task Force formed
- 2013** Information gathering survey developed and sent to 37 hospitals with HBMT programs to assess the need for competencies; Report of findings drafted
- 2014** Report sent to ACIH Board for review; summary sent to survey participants
- 2015** HBMT specific competencies developed based on survey findings and ACIH Competencies; Survey sent asking for feedback on HBMT competencies
- 2016** HBMT competencies sent to ACIH Board for review

DISCUSSION

Thirty-two out of 37 hospitals completed the survey, resulting in an 87 percent response rate. The high response rate and the extent to which respondents provided in-depth information to the open-ended questions indicate an interest in and a recognized need for HBMT competencies among respondents.

The wide range of responses relative to curriculum, orientation procedures and competencies in general, suggests a need for standardization of competencies to support safe and effective HBMT services for patients.

CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

We developed this survey to get a better understanding of the need for specific competencies for massage therapists practicing in integrated settings.

The extreme variability in survey responses to key questions suggests there is no current standard of competencies. The wide range of identified curriculum and orientation needs suggests organizations adopting a standard competency policy could support more safe and effective HBMT services for patients.

Based on these findings, a specific set of HBMT competencies is being developed to complement the ACIH Competencies for Optimal Practice in Integrated Environments [<http://accahc.org/competencies>].

These competencies could remove a barrier for hospitals seeking to develop a massage therapy program and could also be used by hospitals to inform the interviewing and credentialing process. Competencies may be applicable to other integrative health professions in the hospital environments.



Contact us if you are interested in reviewing the full report and the HBMT specific competencies.

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