Massage Therapist

Overview

Massage therapists methodically apply focused, hands-on techniques to promote relaxation and increase circulation in the body’s soft tissues (muscles, tendons, connective tissue, etc.). Although the warming and stimulating effect of massage has a positive effect on joint mobility and range of motion, direct work on the skeleton is outside the massage therapists’ scope of practice.

While many choose to practice independently, certified massage therapists also may work closely with other members of the healthcare team - i.e., physicians, physical therapists (http://www.explorehealthcareers.com/en/Career.70.aspx), rehabilitation counselors (http://www.explorehealthcareers.com/en/Career.42.aspx), chiropractors (http://www.explorehealthcareers.com/en/Career.41.aspx), and acupuncturists (http://www.explorehealthcareers.com/en/Career.84.aspx), among others. In recent years, massage has gained attention from NIH (http://nccam.nih.gov/health/massage/) and other respected sectors of the healthcare community, as a highly effective complementary and alternative medical (http://www.explorehealthcareers.com/en/Field.18.aspx) therapy.

The news about the health benefits of massage should come as no surprise, since it is one of the oldest “healing arts” known to man - dating back to 2,700 B.C., when it was first recorded as a therapeutic technique in the ancient Traditional Chinese Medicine treatise, The Yellow Emperor’s Classic of Internal Medicine.

Today, therapeutic massage is employed throughout the healthcare system - in hospitals, long-term care facilities, and private clinics, for patients ranging from premature infants to the elderly. Many hospices have massage therapists on staff, and massage frequently is offered in wellness centers, drug treatment programs, and pain clinics.

Virtually all massage therapists in the U.S. are trained in Swedish and deep tissue techniques; in addition, they may specialize in other methods and adjunct modalities, such as:

- Acupressure
- Connective tissue massage
- Infant massage
- Lomi-Lomi (Hawaiian massage)
- Manual lymphatic drainage
- Pregnancy massage
- Rolfing
- Shiatsu
- Sports massage
- Thai massage
- Trager Method
- Trigger point therapy
- Tui Na (Traditional Chinese Medical massage)

For more information on becoming a massage therapist, see the American Massage Therapy Association (http://www.amtamassage.org/) (AMTA) website.

Working Conditions

There are a wide range of work settings for massage therapists: their own home-based practice or on-site work in client’s home; corporate offices, shopping malls, or airport lobbies; hospitals, nursing homes, or wellness centers; fitness centers, salons, or hotels; even airport lobbies or cruise ships, among others.
Most massage therapists are sole practitioners, and many work part-time because the work can be physically demanding. Many therapists use their massage practice as an adjunct to another profession, earning approximately half their income from massage. The average amount of hands-on work for most massage therapists is 15 hours per week (excluding administrative tasks, such as keeping client health records, book-keeping, marketing, scheduling, maintaining supplies, etc.).

Hourly fees for massage therapy vary widely, depending upon geographic location and work setting. For instance, a massage therapist at a high-end urban salon might charge $75 to $90/hour, whereas a sole proprietor working out of his or her home in a small town may charge no more than $40 or $50. The average rate nationally is $58/hour, although the rate is generally higher in large metropolitan areas.

Academic Requirements

To become a massage therapist, you must graduate from an established program providing at least 500 hours of in-class, supervised instruction. (Some programs are up to 800 credit hours.) There currently are more than 80 schools accredited by the Commission On Massage Therapy Accreditation (COMTA), and many other massage training programs accredited by other organizations.

Although there is not yet a federal standard regarding pre-requisites, an increasing number of states are requiring massage therapists to also hold a bachelor’s degree. The standard massage curriculum includes coursework in anatomy, physiology, kinesiology, pathology, ethics, and business, as well as practical, hands-on work in both basic and specialized massage techniques.

After graduating from massage school, therapists need to become state-licensed before they can practice. Becoming nationally certified is optional but recommended, because it increases both professional credibility and the likelihood of having your services covered by clients’ health insurance providers.

To become certified by the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork (NCBTMB), a massage therapist must have graduated from a state-licensed massage program with at least 500 hours of formal training and pass the NCBTMB national exam.

Professional Associations

American Massage Therapy Association (AMTA)
National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage & Bodywork (NCBTMB)

Funding Opportunities

Search for funding opportunities in this field

Enrichment Programs

Search for enrichment programs in this field

Source

www.amtamassage.org

Learn more about this field:

Complementary & Alternative Medicine

Average Salary: $29,250
Years in school: 2 - 7 *
Job outlook: Excellent

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