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My View From Here: Exciting Times

By Ralph R. Stephens, BS, LMT, NCTMB

It spring again, at last! Daylight savings time is upon us. Flowers are blooming and legislatures are in session. Exciting times. There is so much news about so much sickness and the lack of insurance. I am amused that there is so little news about how insignificant the flu epidemic was this year, without enough vaccine. We should hope for another contamination "crisis" in the vaccine industry next year.

Preventive maintenance is recommended for your car, but not for you. Just live life until your health fails and then see your friendly neighborhood allopath (medical doctor). Vitamin and mineral supplements are recommended for animals but not for you. All humans need to do is eat a balanced diet of chemical encrusted, GMO foods.

The wellness model seems to be fading. As our profession frantically scrambles for acceptance by insurance companies and allopathic physicians, the focus seems to be turning more to crisis management. Accidents happen and soft-tissue injuries generally are best addressed by massage and stretching; however, the focus should be on getting people well and then keeping them there. We should be about health, not catastrophes. Of course we should handle injuries when they occur, but an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. How much pain and injury could be eliminated if people were educated about posture, movement and proper soft-tissue care? The wellness, holistic care paradigm needs to be taught in all massage schools and promoted to the public. We, and our alternative health colleagues, have a better mousetrap, and the public is beating a path to our door. Already, more people pay out-of-pocket to see alternative providers than to see allopaths. If we could promote personal health savings accounts, the number would increase in our favor.

Where are our beloved associations on this? Talk about creating opportunities for their members! Why are we squandering our resources trying to prove that what we do works in order to gain the acceptance of the allopaths who accidentally kill between 200 and 2,000 people a day? (Estimates vary but are still ahead of any

#2005.05A

other cause of death, including wars.) The allopaths say we are unproven and quacks. Let's see, maybe 50 people have died from a chiropractic manipulation in the last 50 years, a few dozen from supplements, and none I am aware of as the result of massage.

Allopaths kill more people in a day - at the low estimate - than all alternative providers have in over 50 years. Who are the quacks? Who's dangerous? The only thing I can see that's proven about what the allopaths do is that it's damn dangerous. We should be educating the public to this incompetence and promoting our alternative. Who should have to prove what is safe and effective? Allopaths should have to prove medicine is safe and that it is not the biggest killer on the planet or be relegated to second-tier providers. Look at the number of casualties. Where is the outrage? Wouldn't the public be much better off with alternative providers as the gatekeepers, except at the emergency room?

There is such an opportunity for massage and other alternative professions to upset the allopathic applecart, once and for all. Other alternative professions such as acupuncture and chiropractic are positioning themselves for this step. They are fighting for larger scopes of practice and higher standards of education. The massage profession is fighting among itself as to whether 300-500 hours is too much because not everyone can afford to go to a longer program, and schools couldn't make as much money if programs were longer and besides it's "just a massage."

The massage profession needs to step up to the plate and take advantage of the opportunity at bat before we are relegated to slave labor under the thumb of other alternative providers, or worse, the allopaths. How about we begin to call for a nationwide boycott of health insurance programs, by everyone - patients and providers? If no one had insurance, health care would quickly become affordable. We would be a bargain. If no providers accepted insurance, the public would stop buying it. Where would they go - to the most cost-effective providers.

That's us, and other alternative providers. Radical? You bet! But it's spring, time for rebirth, new ideas, new beginnings, hope and idealism.

What's wrong with proposing any idea that might end the reign of death and disease resulting from allopathic medicine's control of health care? What's wrong with wanting to promote health, wellness and awareness, not to mention increased opportunities for massage therapists? It's spring again, at last! Exciting times!


Try This: Remember when treating elbow and wrist conditions, such as medial and lateral epicondylitis (Golfer's and Tennis elbow) and carpal tunnel syndrome, the muscles involved run from

the elbow to the fingers. If you do not get the resolution of the complaint when you only treat at the point of the discomfort, the lateral epicondyle, for example, treat the entire length of the muscle, from elbow to hand with both massage and stretching. Compression with engagement has been found to be very effective.

After warming up the tissues with myofascial and massage techniques, engage (compress) a spot on the problematic muscle with your thumb or finger and as you hold, have the patient flex and extend their wrist. After two or three cycles of flexion/extension, begin moving your thumb or finger in a circular motion (circular deep friction) as they continue to move through two or three more cycles. Release and move about an inch and repeat. Continue until you have treated the entire muscle or the entire forearm. I have found I get slightly better results when working from distal to proximal. It will take some time, but it will bring dramatic results. More next time (July).

Correction: In my March column, while discussing our scope of practice I wrote, "Due to poorly written laws, in some states, CranialSacral Therapy cannot be practiced by massage therapists." I was referring specifically to Mississippi; I have recently been advised by the Upledger Institute that this dark moment of our history has ended: "As of Dec. 17, 2004, The Upledger Institute was approved as a Continuing Education Provider by The Mississippi State Board of Massage Therapy to teach CranioSacral Therapy to massage therapists in Mississippi." At this time there are no states preventing the practice of CranialSacral Therapy by massage therapists. I am most happy to stand corrected. Congratulations and thanks to The Upledger Institute for fighting for our scope of practice.

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 *Massagetoday* - May, 2005, Volume 05, Issue 05

Page printed from:
<http://www.massagetoday.com/archives/2005/05/10.html>