



POSITION STATEMENT

TREATMENT OF SENSITIVE AREAS

Position

The chest wall musculature, breast tissue, inner thigh, anterior neck and gluteal region are considered sensitive areas of the body generally regarded as potential targets for both misunderstandings of intent and actual sexual abuse. To address increased allegations of violation of patient' rights and sexual abuse, the MTAA would like to ensure that sufficient information is being shared with patient regarding the nature of treatment plans and draping being proposed.

Patients are entitled to informed choice concerning all proposed treatments and treatment plans at each massage session. All patients regardless of age or gender who receive Massage Therapy are entitled to a complete explanation of the proposed treatment including: prediction of both frequency and duration of treatments, proposed draping and positioning, risks and benefits, alternatives to treatment or draping, and right of refusal throughout the care plan. In addition, it is the MTAA's position that for proposed treatment of sensitive areas, chest wall musculature, breast tissue, inner thigh, anterior neck and gluteal region, consent should be verbally gained and these areas addressed in the proposed treatment plan. Acknowledgment that information sharing and informed choice has occurred should be placed in the patient's file. Changes to this consent should also be recorded as they occur.

Guidelines

Massage Therapists need to remember, and should inform their patient that, a signed consent is not valid without ongoing informed consent. Therapists should be careful to obtain and record verbal consent for all procedures, including massage to sensitive areas, each time treatment is delivered.

- The patient has the right to a re-assessment of the treatment plan, and when the treatment plan outcomes have been met, treatment of the sensitive area is to be discontinued.
- When a condition does not respond to the proposed treatment plan, it is the responsibility of the Massage Therapist to discontinue the plan and refer the patient to an appropriate care provider.
- Massage Therapists must conduct themselves responsibly and understand that treatment of chest wall musculature, breast tissue, inner thigh, anterior neck and gluteal structures that exceeds reasonable professional practice is disconcerting to the public and the MTAA, and may be considered grounds for Disciplinary action.

None of the above should prevent or discourage a therapist from creating an alternative Information and Consent Form to include signed consent(s) for all treatment plans, but it is not the MTAA's position that this is required.

The Massage Therapist Association of Alberta leads the practice of its members in Alberta. Contact us for more information on this or other position statements.

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