



Notice to the Profession Aromatherapy is Not Within the Scope of Practice of Registered Massage Therapists

Applies to Registered Massage Therapists

The College of Complementary Health Professionals of BC was created on June 28, 2024 through the amalgamation of four health regulatory colleges:

- College of Chiropractors of BC
- College of Massage Therapists of BC
- College of Naturopathic Physicians of BC
- College of Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners and Acupuncturists of BC

All current requirements for standards of clinical and ethical practice issued by the four colleges remain in place upon amalgamation.

This document was created by the College of Massage Therapists of BC and will be updated to reflect the amalgamation.

Notice to the Profession

November 28, 2019

Aromatherapy is Not Within the Scope of Practice of Registered Massage Therapists

CMTBC advises registrants that providing aromatherapy to an individual does not fall within the scope of practice for massage therapy. For the purposes of this Notice, “aromatherapy” is defined as the use of essential oils and fragrances for purported therapeutic benefit or result. The mere use of essential oils in massage therapy treatment does not by itself constitute aromatherapy.

Effective immediately, registrants are advised to cease providing aromatherapy as part of the provision of massage therapy.

Scope of Practice

“Scope of practice” is established through the legislated definition of “massage therapy” in section 1 of the [Massage Therapists Regulation](#) (the “Regulation”). Scope of practice refers to the activities that registered massage therapists are authorized to perform.

The Regulation states that registrants of the College may practise massage therapy. Massage therapy is defined as meaning the health profession in which a person provides, for the purpose of developing, maintaining, rehabilitating or augmenting physical function, or relieving pain or promoting health, the services of

- a. assessment of soft tissue and joints of the body, and
- b. treatment and prevention of physical dysfunction, injury, pain and disorders of soft tissue and joints of the body by manipulation, mobilization and other manual methods.

Registrants provide care that falls within their defined parameters of scope of practice, like all regulated health professionals. Practising within the scope of practice for RMTs means providing primarily manual, hands-on treatment and assessment of soft tissue and joints of the human body.

Aromatherapy is Outside Scope of Practice

Aromatherapy and the use of essential oils for purported therapeutic result by registered massage therapists as part of, or adjunct to, the delivery of massage therapy care does not fall within the scope of practice for massage therapy.

It is outside of scope for registered massage therapists in B.C. to provide aromatherapy – whether by using plant materials, aromatic plant oils or essential oils – specifically for the purpose of improving physical or psychological well-being, i.e. as a form of treatment with possible or alleged therapeutic benefit. As an example, it is not within the scope of practice for a registered massage therapist to make claims that clove oil relieves headaches and pain, or gives relief from indigestion and nausea. As additional examples, it is not within the scope of practice for a registered massage therapist to make a claim that eucalyptus oil can fight migraines or fevers, or that lavender oil can treat depression. These types of claims, and similar claims, are outside the scope of practice for registered massage therapists.

The use of scented massage lotions or oils, or heating or cooling lotions or oils, does not by itself constitute practice outside scope provided that no therapeutic benefit is claimed. However, the registered massage therapist must first obtain patient consent, as these oils and lotions may contain allergens.

Registrants may also use essential oils to scent the environment, though it is recommended that consideration be given both to the possibility of allergens and allergic reactions by some patients, and the increasing prevalence of scent-free policies in many health care institutions.

Effective immediately, registrants are advised to cease providing aromatherapy as part of the provision of massage therapy.

Registrants may still provide services that fall outside the scope of practice of a registered massage therapist if they comply with section 78.91 of the College's Bylaws, which in simple terms states that RMTs may provide a "service or technique" that is not massage therapy, but must not do so in a way that identifies them as RMTs or suggests that they are relying on their RMT status. Also, they are not permitted to bill for such services as massage therapy.

Standards of Practice

The provision of aromatherapy as part of the provision of massage therapy violates section 9(d) of the College's Standards of Practice (Schedule "D" to the College's Bylaws), which requires that registrants maintain awareness of, and practice within, the current scope of practice of massage therapy in British Columbia.

A violation of the College's Standards of Practice may be subject to investigation and professional discipline under the Health Professions Act.