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**Testimony on Assembly Bill 237
Before The
Committee on Health, Utilities, Veterans
and Military Affairs
Wednesday, October 20, 1999, 1:30 P.M.
201 Southeast, State Capitol**

Statement By: Secretary Marlene A. Cummings

Chairperson Moen and members of the committee. Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on Assembly Bill 237 that relates to the educational requirements for massage therapists and bodyworkers. **The Department supports AB 237** and thinks it is in the public's best interest that this legislation be passed and enacted into law as soon as possible.

AB 237 provides for the Department to promulgate rules establishing the education, training or competency requirements that an applicant for a license must satisfy in order to be issued a license of registration under the subchapter. The rules shall require an applicant to complete at least 500 classroom hours of study in a course of instruction in massage therapy or bodywork approved by the Department or at a school approved by the educational approval board under s.39.51.

The Department supports AB 237 because it will provide the Department with the tools necessary to carry out its responsibilities under the statutes. Under the current law, the Department may only accept course work completed at schools of massage therapy and bodywork approved by the Educational Approval Board ("EAB"). Under the proposed law, in addition to accepting course work completed at EAB approved schools, the Department will be able to accept massage therapy and bodywork course work completed at technical colleges, professional schools, universities, and other schools of massage therapy and bodywork operating throughout the United States.

In addition, the EAB approved schools operate in limited geographic areas. In rural areas and smaller cities, many residents do not have easy access to the massage therapy and bodywork schools approved by the EAB. If the proposed law is approved, residents who do not have easy access to EAB approved schools will have the option of completing the necessary course work at nearby technical colleges, universities and professional schools without having to travel great distances and without having to disrupt their businesses for an extended period of time.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on AB 237. We hope the committee members will vote favorably on this important piece of legislation.

AB237-Senate Hrg/mls/rjm

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What's the alternative?

Massage and other therapies enter the mainstream

BY MARISA KELLER

Not long ago, the mention of massage evoked thoughts of decadence—or at the very least, some uncertainty. Today, massage therapy is recognized as providing proactive health benefits and one option in modern society's quest to relieve stress.

"Our culture is incredibly stressed," said Eileen Mahoney Johnstone, massage therapist and program facilitator for St. Mary's Hospital-Ozaukee.

"Eighty to ninety percent of the ailments that bring people to their primary doctors are stress related. Alternative therapy like massage is benign, non-invasive and nurturing."

While alternative therapy is widely associated with relaxation, its therapeutic qualities are believed to go beyond the obvious benefit of stress relief. As a result, it has made its way into traditional arenas. Many clinics and hospitals now offer programs including massage, acupuncture, touch therapy, aromatherapy and exercise, such as Tai Chi and Yoga.

No longer "behind-the-scenes"

According to Tom Ryan, director of the Integrative Medicine Program for Columbia St. Mary's, "Hospitals and clinics are responding to a behind-the-scenes reality. Our regular (traditional medicine) patients were seeking these services elsewhere."

Columbia West and at Columbia St. Mary's new Gateway Health Center in West Allis, part of Community Physicians 27 clinics in the Milwaukee area, began the Integrative Medicine Program last July. "Our's was the first (major local health care organization) to hire and credential providers for complementary alternative medicine," said Ryan. The program incorporates chiropractors, massage therapists, acupuncturists, body workers and other instructors in many areas of alternative therapy.

Kellie Kinderman, a massage therapist at the Chrysalis Women's Wellness Center at Moreland OB-GYN in Waukesha, incorporates an integrative approach to her services. "I've studied many different

styles of massage, including Swedish, neuro-muscular, lymphatic, sports, Reiki, prenatal and postpartum massage," she said. "I look carefully into what my patients need and also give them options for stress relief in their daily lives."

St. Mary's HeartMath Program also emphasizes the connection between the psychological and the physical. As part of the Integrative Medicine Program, HeartMath is directed at people with cardiovascular disease.

"HeartMath teaches patients to consciously control their heart rate variability and thereby control the hormones related with stress," said Ryan. As the first hospital in the United States to obtain a license for this type of program, the Integrative Medicine Program has four certified trainers and offers classes to employees and cardiac rehab program patients and provides monthly weekend seminars to the public.

"This program is based in neuro-cardiology, a solid and tested science," added Ryan. "And yet, it's a program that teaches people to become aware of their stress and manage it."

The integration of traditional medicine and alternative therapy offers many options to patients. Mahoney Johnstone, also a registered nurse, explained: "These types of therapy work because people tap into something beyond the physical. They are able to access the psychological, emotional and even spiritual realms. The therapies are focused in the moment, allowing people to get the nurturing they really need."

These clinics offering alternative therapy stress the importance of credentials. "We created our program to provide the best quality service," said Ryan. "We want people to have the same confidence in these programs as if they came to see one of our physicians."

Certified practitioners

According to both Mahoney Johnstone and Ryan, massage therapists should have graduated from a massage program with 500 to 1,000 training hours. There are also national

certifications and recently, the State of Wisconsin initiated a license program, currently voluntary.

The concerted effort being made by health care professionals to incorporate traditional

and non-traditional methods of wellness to assure that their patients are taken care of is a new phenomenon. "We tend to be very cerebral and as a result we take the body along for the ride," said Mahoney Johnstone.

"Alternative therapy requires that the mind get quiet so that you can concentrate on what's happening physically. From there it's a ripple effect of positive effects for both the mind and body."



American Massage Therapy Association • Wisconsin Chapter
"Promoting Wellness Through Massage"

AB 237

Education Requirements for Massage Therapists

The 1,000+ members of the Wisconsin Chapter, American Massage Therapy Association support the passage of AB 237. The bill is important in assuring consumers that massage therapists are competent.

The Assembly developed a consensus substitute amendment (Assembly Substitute Amendment 1) to AB 237. It has the support of:

- ▶ Regulation and Licensing Secretary Marlene Cummings.
- ▶ The State of Wisconsin Educational Approval Board.
- ▶ Our organization, the Wisconsin Chapter, American Massage Therapy Association.
- ▶ The private/independent schools that provide massage therapy education in Wisconsin.
- ▶ The State Assembly, which passed the Substitute Amendment on a voice vote.

AB 237, in the form of Assembly Substitute Amendment 1, is a modest proposal. It does 2 things:

- ▶ It expressly authorizes the Secretary of the Department of Regulation and Licensing to approve courses of instruction in massage therapy, while maintaining the Education Approval Board's jurisdiction over private schools.
- ▶ It provides for an examination of applicants after March 1, 2000, including authority for the Department of Regulation and Licensing to test on Wisconsin laws and administrative rules affecting massage therapy.

Our statewide membership respectfully requests favorable Senate action on the consensus version of AB 237 (Assembly Substitute Amendment 1) during your upcoming October 26 - November 11th floorperiod.

Vlad Thomas
Legislative Chair
Whitewater

Alan Weld
Chapter President
Madison

cc: Tony Driessen, Quarles & Brady LLP
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