



# MTABC Student Scholarship Award

Utopia Academy

January 2, 2013

## Natalie Woodhouse

Why is Research Important to the  
Future of the Massage Therapy Profession

When passion transforms into a profession, research provides the backbone of comprehensible fact, observation, and measurable outcome to build a common ground of rational understanding for validation and assurance to the public. Research is important to influence the growth of massage therapy to better meet the demands of an ever changing and increasingly integrated health care system. Taboos and misconception aside, massage therapy has made incredible feats over the last few decades, gaining reputable headway and lasting relationships in the health industry.

Then why is research *not* a bigger part of the future for massage therapy? Our field is notably dedicated to providing adaptive health care, and integrated education and yet accessible research documentation remains to be sporadic. Commonly, massage therapy research has inconclusive findings and outcomes that require further exploration with application to greater populations (Evans, 2007). These hungry results are also competing for recognition in the health care system concerned with life-and-death research like cancer, or that of cardiovascular. In comparison there is a clear lack of thorough medical and social scientific literature in the massage field, especially in Canada (Dryden, 2012). Yet, the public continues to increase their use of massage therapy, and there is greater acceptance by main stream health care professionals, seen in the many doctor referrals. As our social and cultural circles expand, the public is increasingly demanding integration between conventional and complementary health care practices (Dryden, 2012). What then, in these growing circles, is the motivation required to expand research in massage therapy?

Consider the interplay of intrinsic and extrinsic factors to the human experience and the observation of massage therapy and how complicated the variables become. Research exploring a specific technique or isolating a particular demographic becomes much more complicated when we no longer see our subject as numbers, facts or figures. The physical expression of a subject in any given treatment, is influenced by multiple external variables and physiological interactions within our nervous system and complex chemistry involved in the human psyche and emotions (Mate, 2008). What would happen if we were to consider the physical expression of the researcher and the researched, influenced by their environment, food-water intake, their mental-emotional status during the contribution to the study. The potential for massage therapy opens up when we must consider all unconventional quantum variables that contribute to the subjective body experience when being researched (Hameroff, 1998). As people become more self aware, research can help reflect these deeper components people yearn to understand. Massage can help invest a broader understanding and connection to the physical, mental-emotional experience and inspire lifestyle participation. Instead of

achieving numbers, the desire and motivation is driven by the interest of being a part of something meaningful.

Research is essential to our field to build a common language between therapists and non-therapists, offering not only credentials but strengthening the bandwidth of attention that will alter the social taboos of touch and deepen our human experience. Asking more questions, breaking standard misnomers, employing productive discoveries for the intention of furthering health, strengthening our ability to care for, and heal one another outside of conventional treatment. Giving us as practitioners a common ground to stand on and a welcoming platform for those unsure to now approach confidently. As we develop self awareness and engage in serving others, we enter into an even broader spectrum of experience.

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