



## Oncology Massage Success Blueprint

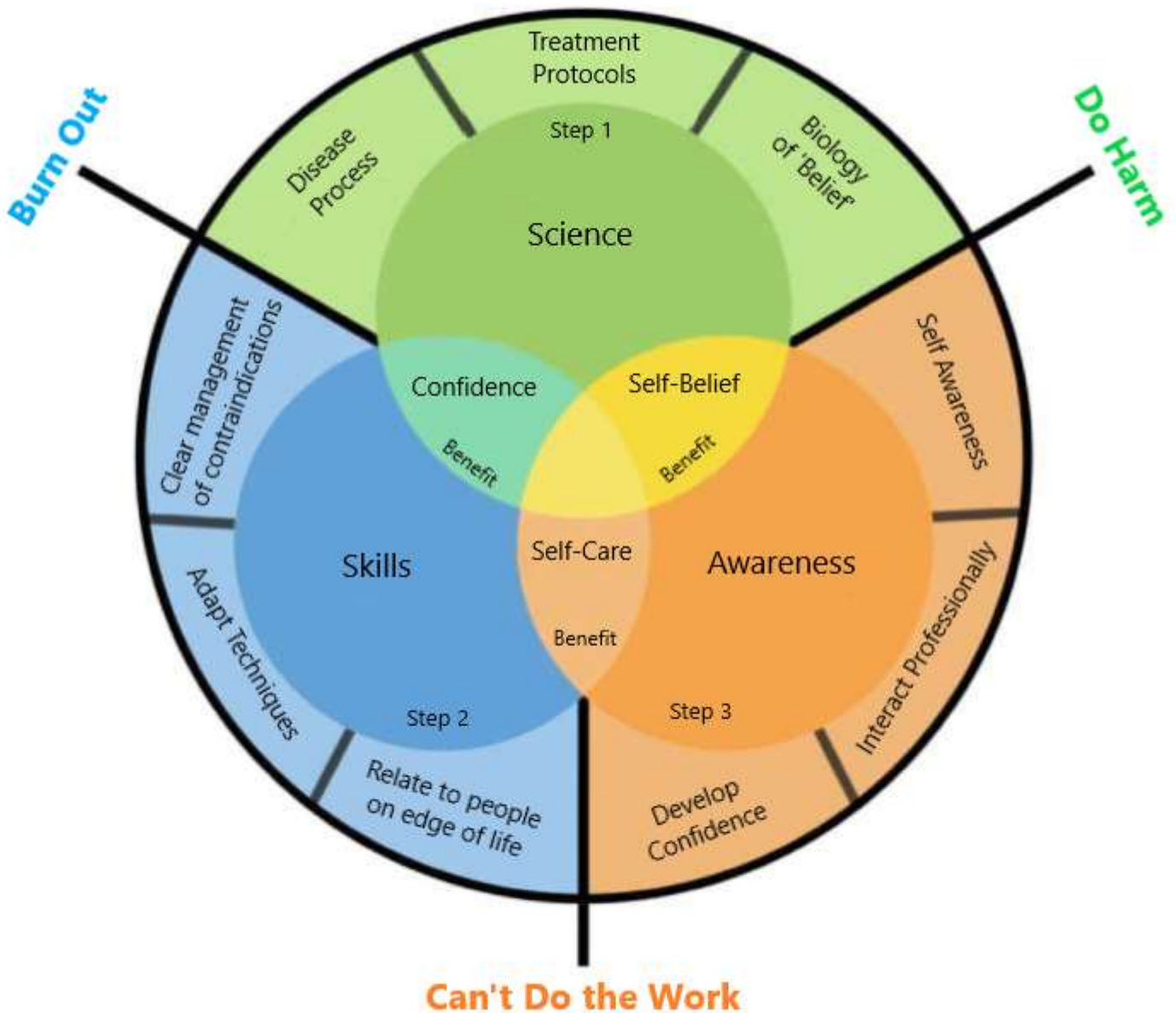
Oncology Massage Global is a leading international, integrative training group that helps massage therapists and allied health providers upgrade their tactile skills and confidently work with clients experiencing complex health issues. When massage therapists train with OMG they create a safe working environment for their clients, doing no harm, and providing a unique and much needed service.

Since 2004 medical research has shown that massage, by specifically trained oncology massage therapists, reduces anxiety by 59%, pain by 47%, fatigue by 42%, nausea by 51% and depression by 48%. We all have clients that book into our massage clinic with cancer or a history of cancer. Over the last 14 years a growing community awareness of the medically proven benefits of Oncology Massage has increased the demand for oncology massage.

For this reason, we created the Oncology Massage Success Blueprint to insure that you are skilled and can confidently increase your client base even if clients have a cancer diagnosis.

There are 3 Key elements:

- **Understanding the science** of cancer and cancer treatment.
- **Adapting your professional skills** to work with all illnesses
- **Increasing your awareness** of the physical, emotional and spiritual need of people on the edge of life.



When you understand the challenges faced by people with cancer, in cancer treatments and the effect they have on their physical and emotional challenges, your massage is subtly changed and your clients tell their friends in the radiotherapy waiting room, the chemotherapy treatment room or at their cancer support group, of the many benefits they get from their weekly or fortnightly oncology massage and your practice slowly increases. As the number of clients with cancer increases the need for professional support to provide effective Oncology Massage increases.

Now that you understand that there is a growing need for specialised training in Oncology Massage let me explain more about the diagram above.

In 2018 the National Institute of Complementary Medicine (NICM) at Western Sydney University released a research paper that shows that 74% of people diagnosed with cancer chose **oncology massage** as their preferred complementary therapy. This awareness leads to strong business outcomes for massage professionals suitably trained in oncology massage techniques and theory.

### **How will Oncology Massage work for you?**

How can you increase the number of clients with serious health challenges and take good care of yourself too?

There are three major areas that you need to explore;

#### **1. Science**

Did you study science at school?

How long ago did you study science?

One of the fastest growing areas of medical science is cancer research, drug therapy and treatment protocols. We cannot keep up, even GP's are challenged by the speed of change. When you have strategies and communication skills around the science and the medical language that confronts your clients you begin to build on your own understanding of the new language of cancer treatment. Your client feels supported and you assist them to achieve the goals of their medical team.

Understanding how organs and cells work, change or respond to diseases or treatment for any life limiting disease ensures that you are aware of any potential problems that cancer clients might be facing or presenting to you at your clinic.

Medical research shows that oncology massage can significantly help with symptom management during the treatment phase of cancer as well as lingering effects blocking their quality of life in survivorship.

A scientific understanding of cancer and cancer treatment builds your professional confidence, as well as the understanding of medical language and how medical treatment is thought to work.

#### **2. Skills**

All the tactile skills you learnt in massage school or during Bowen training are the springboard for your work with Oncology Massage and Bowen.

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Most of the massage and tactile skills that you have learnt up until now are suitable for you to **safely adapt** and use with any client with cancer or in cancer treatment, in fact anyone experiencing major health challenges, like heart disease or diabetes or neurodegenerative diseases like Parkinson's disease.

Changing and adapting your massage skills is essential to ensure safe, doing no harm, outcomes for your clients. Again the science is important, it is the WHY that underpins the changes you must embrace. You need to adapt your pressure, site and position when doing an Oncology Massage and this takes understanding, acceptance and supervised practice.

### 3. Awareness

Being completely focused on your client (1), from the first phone call to book an appointment, is only the first essential awareness principle. You need to embrace all three awareness principles to become a skilled Oncology Massage therapist.

1. Client awareness
2. Self awareness and
3. Cultural awareness.

When you begin to notice your own reactions (2) to a client's story you begin to practice self awareness. With self awareness you are conscious of your own behaviour, i.e. when you are reacting to elements from your own experience or 'life story' rather than 'walking alongside' your client as they experience cancer.

Awareness of how 'the world' or the local community (3), view cancer and cancer treatments; complementary medicine and alternative treatment choices; the role of nutrition in wellness and 'quality of life versus 'quantity of life' challenges faced by many of our clients, then you are becoming uniquely 'aware' as an Oncology Massage therapist.

If you judge or criticise it is less than helpful for yourself or your client with a diagnosis of cancer. Sometimes clients have chosen to do treatments that they are philosophically opposed to and if you express your thoughts it can be hurtful and even damaging to their recovery.

You can learn professional awareness and communication skills to navigate the challenges. When you offer a professional response to your client with cancer, in cancer treatment or with a history of cancer, uncluttered by your fears and emotions, a truly beneficial Oncology Massage happens.

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Awareness based on knowledge and skill builds professional sustainability and we thrive in our work as an oncology massage therapist.

In a nutshell.....remember..... **Awareness**

Professional awareness as an oncology massage therapist includes:

1. Understanding your own emotions
2. Understanding the complexities of client's lives
3. Understanding the role of massage in the wider medical community, the local culture and the global mindset.
4. Understanding your beliefs around our own mortality...this is essential.

**General concepts that might help you feel less powerless.....**

Do you know about?

**Science: an essential general topic**

- Anatomy and physiology is the beginning of understanding the body.
- When we work with clients experiencing life changing illnesses we need to know much more about how the body works.
- We need to understand how disease processes arise over time or relatively quickly
- The role of the immune system and what influences it.
- How chemotherapy, radiation and surgery work separately and together to treat cancer.
- What influences the 'quality of life' during treatment and into survivorship?

**Disease Process**

- Behind every disease there is a period of **inflammation**, chronic or acute.
  - Systemic inflammation slowly leads to tissues and organs being compromised and then they don't function properly.
  - We feel sick.
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## Treatment Protocols

- In the past 50 years we have seen the rise of pharmaceuticals for most diseases.
- Chemotherapy for cancer is a comparatively new treatment and is still being 'tested' for efficacy.
- Radiotherapy has been used for cancer since the late 1800's and, with advances in physics and computers, radiation is now finely targeted and side effects are reduced.

## 'Biology of Belief'

- The new science of epigenetics leads us to understand how what we think and feel affects every cell in our body.
- Human transplant technology has led to a new and exciting understanding of psycho-neuro-immunology (PNI).
- When we work as a massage or Bowen therapist what we think or feel matters - if we feel pity and fear that energy flows through us to our clients .

## The skills

- The skills you learnt as a remedial massage therapist need to be fully adapted to work with physically and emotionally fragile people, who are experiencing a compromised immune systems.
  - In medical treatment or living with cancer, even with a history of cancer, our bodies change in a variety of ways and we need to adapt our skills every time we massage the person to **'inch them forward'**.
  - Most people tell me that they can notice the difference between how they felt before and after the diagnoses of cancer. Certainly before and after cancer treatment.
  - Most tactile techniques can be adapted to Oncology Massage principles and with practice and communication these new skills are popular in the wider community.
  - One in two Australians will have cancer before 75 years old. (ABS 2014) There is plenty of work for Oncology Massage therapists.
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## Management of contraindications

When do you send your client to their doctor?

- You need to know when to STOP the massage and send/take the client to the doctor or hospital.
- The signs and symptoms are of **blood clots, infections and abnormal reactions of treatment.**
- When you understand how cancer grows and spreads in the body; how cancer treatment affects the cells and the emotions, you can adapt the 'pressure, site or position' and 'communication' during your oncology massage.
- Most contraindications can be managed by adapting pressure, site and the position of the client AND stop the massage if the **STOP** sign issues arise.
- **Nobody is untouchable with oncology massage, from diagnosis to the end of life.**
- **Do not create a modern day 'lepers' by deciding someone is untouchable, there is always skin that we can hold and lotion. See S4OM website for articles on this topic.**
- If the client can have cream or lotion applied to their skin or if they can be dried with a towel.... they can receive an Oncology Massage, level 1 pressure.

## Adapt Techniques

- The location of lymph nodes and 'watersheds' are vital if you are working with clients who have compromised lymph nodes.
  - Surgical removal or biopsy of lymph nodes changes the flow of lymph around the body.
  - **Safe, skilled touch** for a client with cancer or a history of cancer, in cancer treatment or at the end of life is the skill you need to build your clinical practice as an Oncology Massage therapist.
  - **Continuing education in the field of oncology massage is vital.**
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## What do we say?

A topic for discussion is the challenge for massage and Bowen therapists when 'talking' with the client. There are three key issues:

1. We need to lead our clients through a comprehensive 'intake' process to create a safe environment for the Oncology Massage therapist to work.
2. We need to create a safe space for the client to process their emotions, especially when they are challenged with a life-limiting or life ending disease.
3. We do not judge or criticise the choices that our client explores or makes.

## **Interact professionally with you client and medical caregivers = maintain scope of practice boundaries.**

- Oncology Massage requires you to be comfortable when working with the medical team, providing comfort to the patient and support to the treating medical team.
- During your massage session, when problems and suspicions arise, you need to contact the medical professional caring for the client.

**A cohesive team, built on professional trust, gets the best outcomes for the client.**

## How do Oncology Massage therapists develop confidence?

In my experience over twenty years of teaching, practicing and supporting oncology massage; when you understand the science of cancer and cancer treatment; the language of medical intervention; what your clients may be feeling emotionally, your confidence grows.

Mentoring and support offered by teachers and colleagues, who are passionate about, and experienced in, our work allows us to thrive as Oncology Massage therapists, then we interact as an Oncology Massage professional.

## Thriving as an Oncology Massage Therapist

When you are up to date in your relationships you are free to work in the present moment. If you are healthy and taking good care of yourself, you are the best 'role-model' for your clients and, your service to them is 'first class'. Clients come back and tell others about your clinic.

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## Fact - First do no harm .....

Did you know?

- Medical research in 2012 showed that Oncology Massage therapists need to have specialist knowledge before treating clients with cancer to optimise outcomes for the client.
- Remedial and deep tissue massage is contraindicated no matter how often people have massage in relation to their diagnosis of cancer, or how often they urge you to work 'deeper'.
- Deep massage before or after a cancer diagnosis or cancer treatment can cause worrying 'flu' symptoms and if platelets are lowered by chemotherapy or radiation, harmful bleeding can occur if too much pressure is applied.

**So, as an Oncology Massage Therapist you feel:**

1. Frustrated by the restraint put on massage therapists due to a basic misunderstanding of massage training systems, topics taught and the high standard to professionalism in the tactile therapy community.
2. Disappointed that I cannot massage people with soft tissue medical challenges, including cancer, because of the widespread belief and general perception that massage is a 'deep tissue' technique.
3. Misunderstood because doctors and nurses don't take time to read the medical research so they understand the science behind oncology massage, including the significant benefits for people with cancer or in cancer treatment and then they withhold referrals for Oncology Massage that would relieve suffering.

Especially if you **feel trivialised** as it is assumed that I don't understand complex medical conditions!

For example:

Biological process of cancer,

Treatment for cancer,

Relaxation response of the body.

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If you feel you are blocked from communicating the statistically significant benefits of Oncology Massage for people with a diagnoses or history of cancer. Blocked from conversing with people who could feel less anxious, less pain, less nausea or depression, even when we give our time to volunteer our support to university research (NICM paper 2018).

## **We think this is the solution:**

If as massage therapists we have;

- A clear structure to fully understand physical, emotional and psychological aspects of cancer so you can confidently massage cancer patients,
- A formal training that teaches advanced techniques in the tactile sciences or therapies that help with side effects of complex medical condition,
- **Plus experienced mentors and a network of colleagues we access when fears or doubts arise, you have a renewed confidence when massaging medically challenged clients.**

### **Outcomes with oncology massage training:**

You Feel;

- Reassured and confident that it is safe to massage people with complex medical conditions and that you will 'do no harm'.
  - Skilled with new verbal abilities and knowledge to communicate the medically proven benefits of oncology massage
  - A part of a unique specialisation that is recognised by other health professionals. Transformed because now you have skills and techniques that can be used for 'life', alongside your current skills and training.
  - That you belong to a supportive community of like-minded therapists and professional mentors to help you thrive as an oncology massage therapist.
  - A sense of 'potential' because you can join university research projects, create positive biological and relaxation changes in your clients, and increase the number of clients in your practice.
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## Meaningful Impact

- Choosing massage or Bowen therapy as a profession is a clear statement that your heart is open to serving others.
- Chronic, systemic diseases are increasing as we live longer, are exposed to more chemicals or toxins and culturally we have less family support.
- 'Compassionate touch' impacts our clients, our self and all who love one another in the world.
- More and more people are instinctively seeking safe, compassionate touch.

Oncology Massage Global makes a meaningful contribution to the Massage Profession, impacting and expanding compassion by teaching massage therapists a step by step method to become a successful Oncology Massage therapist.

If you like to help the growing number of people with cancer?  
Book a '**Cancer Confidence Session**' with Eleanor or Monica

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