



ONCOLOGY MASSAGE BLUEPRINT

Oncology Massage Global (OMG) is a leading international, integrative training group that helps massage therapists and allied health providers upgrade their tactile skills to 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.

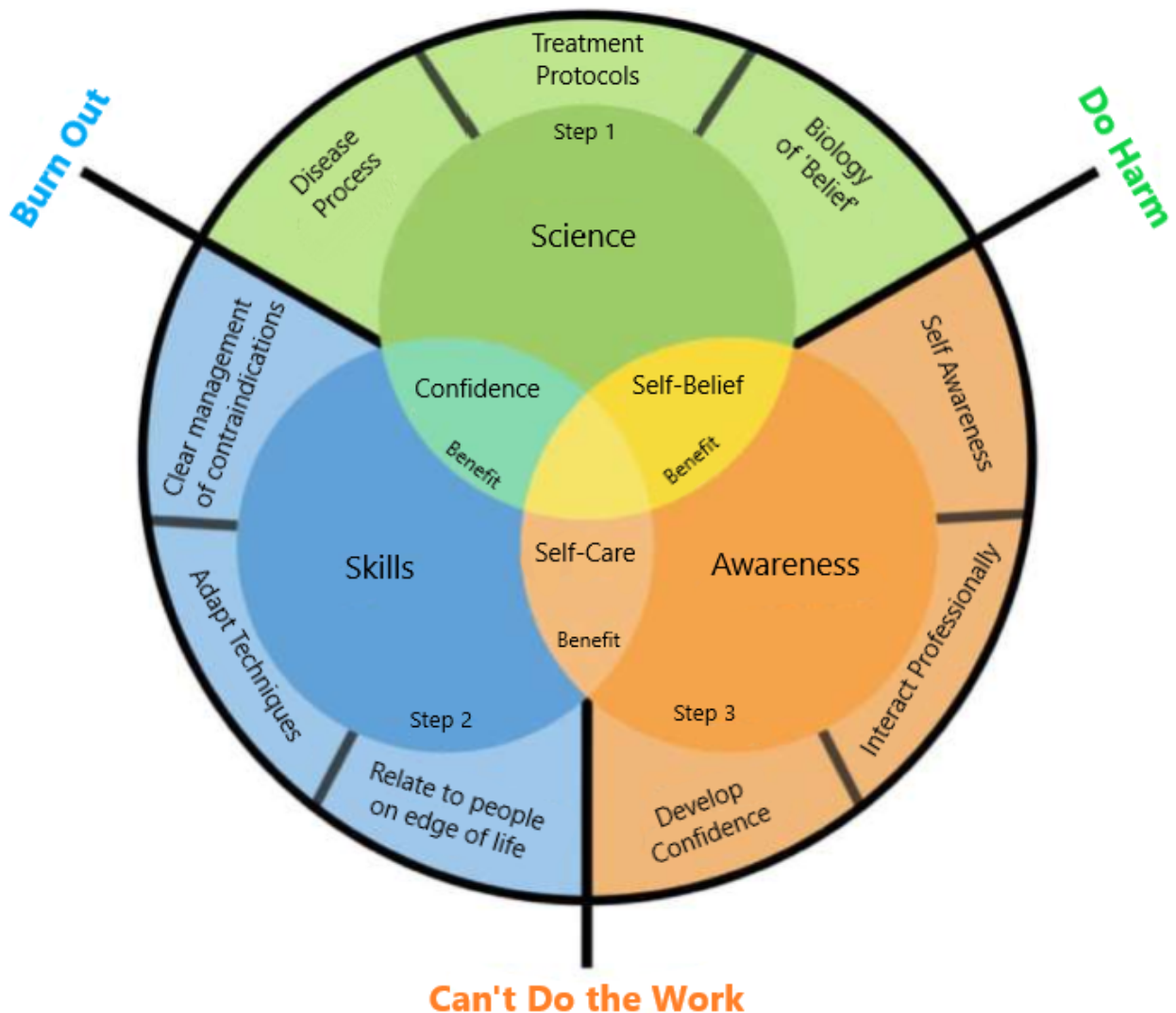
We all have clients with a diagnosis of cancer that book into our massage clinic. Some clients have a history of cancer and are living well. Most people don't tell us about their history accurately.

Over the last 20 years the growing community awareness of the medically proven benefits of Oncology Massage has increased the demand for oncology massage. To ensure safe outcomes for our clients therapists must have a working knowledge of Oncology Massage techniques and contra-indications.

For this reason, we created the Oncology Massage Blueprint. Follow the Blueprint and you will do no harm and with specialised training you will have the skills to confidently work with clients who have a cancer diagnosis, a history of cancer or they are at the end of their life.

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%.

Ref: Memorial Sloan Kettering article: "Massage Therapy for Symptom Control: Outcome Study at a Major Cancer Center", download at <https://oncologymassageglobal.com.au/oncology-massage/>



There are three areas of focus for massage therapists wanting to transition to oncology massage:

1. Understanding the science of cancer and cancer treatment.
2. Adapting your professional massage skills to work with all illnesses. Manage contraindications.
3. Increasing your awareness of the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of people on the edge of life.

When you understand the challenges faced by people with cancer or in cancer treatments your massage is subtly changed and compassionately modified. A cancer diagnosis and treatment changes clients physically and emotionally. You must change how you work with sick clients. You must change your massage pressure, what part or parts of the body you massage and how you position a client to receive a massage. The challenge of changing your massage technique is the first step towards a successful Oncology Massage.

SCIENCE

Disease processes, treatment protocols and the 'Biology of Belief' are the three key elements of understanding the science.

One of the fastest growing areas of medical science is cancer research, drug therapy and treatment protocols. You 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 of cancer treatment your clients begin to trust you. All this information is readily available to patients and to you as well.

Clients usually know the name of the drugs that they are receiving and you need to have a section in your in-take form where they can write them down. Your job is to 'look them up' between visits so you understand how they work and the common side effects. Your client will feel supported and you can 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.

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. It can take a long time to feel sick. Often a diagnosis of cancer is a complete surprise...a shock.

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 that '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 you work as a massage or Bowen therapist what you think or feel matters - if you feel pity and fear that energy flows through you to your clients.

SKILLS

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

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 e.g. Parkinson's disease.

One in two Australians will have cancer before 75 years old. (ABS 2014) It is vital that professional therapists understand how to massage this changing population, ensuring that they 'do no harm'.

CLEAR MANAGEMENT OF CONTRAINDICATIONS

You need to know when to **STOP** the massage and send/take the client to the doctor or hospital.

The signs are heat, redness, pain and pallor. The symptoms could be caused by blood clots, infections and abnormal reactions of treatment. If you notice these changes you must stop the massage and send for or call a doctor.

Nobody is untouchable with Oncology Massage techniques, from diagnosis to the end of life. See S4OM website for articles on this topic.

Continuing education in the field of Oncology Massage is vital.

ADAPT TECHNIQUES

Changing and adapting your massage skills to medically proven Oncology Massage techniques is essential to ensure safe, doing no harm, outcomes for your clients. The science is important; it is what helps you understand the skill changes you must embrace. You need to reduce your pressure so that you don't 'over work' the fascia and release toxins too rapidly (clients will get flu symptoms for up to a week); ensure that the area you massage is a 'safe site' to massage (not recently irradiated or have a surgical wound or scar in need of healing) and the position your client is resting in for the massage is very comfortable e.g. the position that they can sleep in.

The main goal of Oncology Massage is total relaxation or sleep. This technique requires understanding, acceptance and supervised practice.

RELATE TO PEOPLE ON EDGE OF LIFE

Oncology massage is actually "medical massage" and the deep relaxation it offers will support everyone with a life-changing or life-limiting illness. When you massage clients on the edge of life your conversation and general attitude is almost as important as your skilled touch. If you are feeling fearful or judgmental you limit the client's capacity to find their own best answers (feelings). Projection of your own beliefs and attitudes is less than helpful when the other person is grappling with life or death.

If a massage therapist can 'hold the space' in silence, sometimes in the midst of noise or chaos, they create an environment where self knowing and wisdom can blossom. I'm not saying "don't talk" to your clients while they are on the massage table or during the intake process; I'm encouraging you to be mindful of when and what you say if you are working with clients on the "edge of life". Remember every word you say may be repeated (often out of context) to the doctor or nurse at the next hospital visit.

Medical research shows that Oncology Massage can significantly help with symptom management during the treatment phase of cancer as well as lingering effects of cancer treatment that reduce the quality of life in survivorship.

AWARENESS

Professional awareness as an oncology massage therapist includes:

- Understanding the complexities of your client's life
- Understanding your own emotions, especially around your own mortality
- Understanding the role of massage in the wider medical community, the local culture and the client's family.

The challenges for massage and Bowen therapists are:

- *To lead your client through a comprehensive 'intake' process,*
- *To provide a safe, quiet and respectful space for your client, and*
- *To not judge or criticise the choices that your client explores or makes.*

Interact respectfully with your client and medical caregivers.

CLIENT AWARENESS

Client awareness begins at the first contact with your client. You begin to assess their mood, posture, energy level and confidence from their tone of voice, even if it is over the phone. You must adapt your response to mirror theirs so that they don't feel overwhelmed by your energy that is usually higher than their own. Slowing your breathing to match the client's respiration rate is an excellent way to begin an Oncology Massage.

SELF-AWARENESS

When you begin to notice your own reactions to a client's story you begin to practice self-awareness. With self-awareness you are conscious of your own behaviour, thoughts and prejudices. When you are reacting to elements from your own experience or life story rather than walking alongside your client as they experience cancer. You could be projecting unwanted energy onto your burdened client. If you judge or criticise the choices of your client we negate the benefits of the massage. Your well-meaning advice is the last thing others need, especially when they are fearful and worried.

CULTURAL AWARENESS

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 professional relationship develops.

Your clients will talk about the many benefits they get from their weekly or fortnightly oncology massage. As the number of clients with cancer coming to your clinic increases the need for professional support is essential. Qualified Oncology Massage therapists provide an effective and ongoing professional support network for your clinical practice.

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.

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

Thriving as an Oncology Massage Therapist means that you don't burnout or do harm to your clients.

You continue gathering experience and meaningfully contribute to the cancer-wellness community.

In Oncology Massage Module 1 you will learn:

- *Advanced anatomy & physiology and patho-physiology.*
- *How cancer and other life changing illnesses affects the body.*
- *Understand why some diseases develop over a lifetime and others arise quickly.*
- *The role of the immune system and what influences our immune response.*
- *How chemotherapy, immune-modulatory drug therapy, radiation and surgery treat cancer.*
- *Learn what influences 'quality of life' during treatment and survivorship.*

Would you like to help the growing number of people with cancer?

Book a 'Cancer Confidence Session' with Eleanor or Monica

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monica@oncologymassageglobal.com.au (Spanish)