

ALCOHOL & DRUGS IN MASSAGE THERAPY SETTINGS

Introduction

MTAM Recommendations are reviewed annually and subject to change. **Last revised: 02/2017**

Massage therapists are part of the health care system. The standards of practice the Massage Therapy Association of Manitoba follows are aligned to the rules, governing Acts, and the nationally agreed upon standards of practice for professional massage therapists. Patients who may be under the influence of drugs or alcohol cannot be treated, as they cannot, by definition, give informed consent.

General Rule

Massage Therapists in Manitoba cannot treat anyone under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Massage therapists are expected to obtain informed consent from patients prior to commencing any treatment. For consent to be informed, certain requirements must be met. The patient must be properly informed and have the capacity to consent.

Determination of Capacity

This determination will depend on the individual's ability to understand the situation and the treatment proposed. A capable person can understand the information being provided about the treatment being proposed, and is able to appreciate the consequences of having the treatment or not.

The Massage Therapy Association of Manitoba believes that **any** amount of alcohol, **any** quantity of illegal drugs, and some prescription drugs and medication, to the degree that they may impair an individual's judgment, should be regarded as **inhibitors to informed consent**.

But it's just one glass of wine.

Even one glass of wine is enough to put into question the ability of a patient to give informed consent.

How do I tell the spa/clinic owner I cannot treat someone?

Massage Therapists may find themselves in a difficult position needing to refuse to give treatment to someone who has been consuming alcohol as part of an overall service available at a spa. Treating someone even after one glass of wine can present a significant risk to the patient, to the spa, and to the massage therapist.

1) Talk to the Clinic or Spa owner

Let them know that this is part of your professional standards of practice and that you cannot treat someone who is not capable of giving informed consent. It is your right by law.

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2) It is in their best interest

A key discussion to have with owners and managers is that from a liability perspective, it is in their best interest to have massage therapy treatments (and any other treatments for that matter) finished before allowing the consumption of alcohol, if that is part of their services. This said, the MTAM maintains that alcohol in any health care setting or setting where health care treatments are being given, is not safe.

3) Contact the MTAM

We are here for our members. If you find it difficult to address this with the owner/manager, let us speak to them on your behalf.