

## **Why MLD Certification is Important for MTs**

A Certification in Manual Lymph Drainage will allow you to network with other health care professionals to receive referrals of clients who may be experiencing swelling (edema) due to many medical conditions, including injury, postsurgical healing, autoimmune disorders, anxiety, cancer. Many times, clients have been seen in a traditional rehab setting for lymphedema treatment, yet need more visits than their insurance plan will allow, or need long term maintenance or assistance with garments and their self-MLD. A massage therapist trained in MLD can be a wonderful addition to this continuum of care.

Adding Manual Lymph Drainage (MLD) Certification to your massage therapy skill set opens up numerous possibilities for client referrals. Manual lymph drainage is a gentle manual technique that stimulates a malfunctioning or fatigued lymphatic system. Keeping the lymphatic system in good condition is imperative for promoting good health, and for restoring good health when the system has been compromised.

Postsurgical clients who can benefit from manual lymph drainage include those recovering from cosmetic surgeries such as face-lifts, breast augmentation, liposuction, and orthopedic surgeries such as joint repair or replacement. Manual lymph drainage effectively reduces swelling even before appropriate muscle movement and function can be restored. Manual lymph drainage also assists with stimulating the parasympathetic response in the body and can be helpful in the management of anxiety and stress disorders. These clients will benefit from general stress reduction, detoxification and enhanced immune function.

Over the last decade, manual lymph drainage has come to be recognized for its profound benefits to oncology clients immediately after surgery and later during their ongoing recovery period. MLD therapy reduces edema, helps control pain, relieves constipation caused by pain medications, provides general relaxation, reduces stress and improves sleep, in addition to decreasing the limb size. Due

to the complexity of treatment and care for oncology patients, massage therapists may need to coordinate with their client's physician. Oncology clients who have undergone lymph node removal as part of their cancer treatment may develop a very specific swelling called lymphedema, caused by localized damage to the lymphatic circulatory system. A big part of the lymphatic system, the vessels, are located very close to the surface of the body, thus manual lymph drainage techniques are applied very effectively with much less pressure than regular massage. An additional benefit is that this light technique reduces wear and tear on the therapist's body as well, yet has quick profound results.

### **Networking with Doctors and Rehab Professionals**

Because manual lymph drainage is an effective treatment in clients suffering various medical conditions, networking with physicians and other medical professionals should become commonplace for massage therapists certified in manual lymph drainage. Certified Lymphedema Therapists who are Physical or Occupational Therapists often refer their patients with lymphedema to manual lymph drainage-certified massage therapists who can provide a continuum of care.

After obtaining a client's consent to discuss his medical history and speak with his physician, the massage therapist should introduce herself to the primary doctor or nurse practitioner in charge of the client's care. Pertinent questions would be "Is manual lymph drainage treatment indicated for my client?" or "Is there a possibility manual lymph drainage will interfere with other medical conditions or treatments for this client?" Inquiries such as these are very important, particularly for oncology clients and clients with other complicated conditions. These inquiries are typically well received by physicians because they demonstrate responsible client care by massage therapists and open the door for additional physician referrals in the future.