

## **2019 Assembly of Delegates Report**

### **Submitted by Assembly of Delegates Advisory Committee (AODAC)**

#### **Introduction:**

This report outlines events from the 2019 Assembly of Delegates meeting and has been prepared for Delegates and the National Board of Directors. It includes a summary of the discussions around both the position statement idea proposal that was brought forth as well as the two discussion topics. This report also outlines several follow up items for consideration by the AODAC and National Board of Directors.

#### **General information:**

This was the second meeting of the AMTA Assembly of Delegates, having changed over from the House of Delegates format in 2018. Eighty seven (87) delegates representing 50 states and the District of Columbia were present. Delegates were seated at 11 round tables to facilitate better discussion and 11 non-delegate facilitators were assigned to those tables to assist during the round table discussions. Three (3) microphones were used during floor discussions as opposed to two (2) in the old format. Two (2) microphones were used for comments by delegates from the floor and one (1) was used for questions and clarifications of information discussed. One (1) position statement idea proposal was discussed and voted on and two (2) discussion items were presented to delegates for discussion and comment.

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#### **Position Statement IDEA Proposal:**

*Online education is an appropriate method to deliver curriculum content for non-psychomotor subjects in massage therapy entry-level training and continuing education.*

#### **Discussion Overview**

The majority of the discussion for this online education position statement idea was related to whether or not there is a need for a statement of this nature. Also, if it were to become an official statement, how would the profession vet or accredit these online classes? Interestingly, it was not mentioned what role NCBTMB would play in approving the online classes.

There was a noticeable split among the delegates, as some felt that this statement could promote additional CE opportunities in rural areas, while others felt that AMTA already demonstrates their support of online education as the association offers online classes. Some delegates mentioned that online education allows for a more diverse learning opportunity and may provide additional opportunities for our members, while others suggested that online classes diminish the value of hands-on learning regardless of the subject. There was also a split as to whether online classes are appropriate for entry-level massage courses.

Finally, delegates posed the question, “if a position statement around online education (especially in reference to entry-level classes) was adopted, would this require an amendment to membership eligibility since AMTA requires 500 in-class hours?” The answer is, not necessarily. If your state allows online courses to be counted toward your education hours, and you receive a license from that state, you are still eligible for AMTA membership. Currently AMTA requires one or more of the following: graduation from a minimum 500 in-class hour, entry-level massage therapy school; proof of current state or provincial licensure (where applicable), certification by the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork.

### **Recurring Comments Related to the Process**

- If a position statement IDEA goes on to become an official AMTA Position Statement, it does not come back to the AOD for final approval. Some delegates disagree with this workflow.
- Just like the 2018 AOD meeting, some delegates had a difficult time approving a proposed position statement idea that could potentially change based on the outcome of the workgroup’s assessment as to whether or not there is adequate research to support a statement of that nature.

### **Follow Up**

Some comments and questions that came up during this discussion will merit follow up and will be further outlined in the **Action** section of this report. They are as follows:

1. Some delegates questioned if this type of position statement is relevant or appropriate (i.e. should AMTA position statements only address the efficacy of massage for various conditions?) To counter this concern, it was noted that AMTA currently has a position statement related to portability. It would be helpful if AMTA could outline content guidelines on position statements as they relate to AMTA.
2. The NBOD has the authority to send a position statement idea on to a research work group even if the AOD did NOT pass the idea. However, the probability of this happening is extremely unlikely. In any case, can the position statement workflow document be updated to reflect this scenario?
3. Is there a more efficient way for delegates to ask the proposal authors a question? Since delegates are discussing these items in the Delegate Forum, the authors many times do not have access to the forum. At this point, the moderator is the liaison between authors and delegates, which can cause lag time.

## Voting Results

This Online Education proposal **did not pass** the Assembly of Delegates. The AODAC recommends that this proposal NOT be assigned to a position statement work group. The vote was 51 no, 36 yes.

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### Discussion Topic: Common Language:

*What specifically does “speaking the same language” mean in relation to massage therapy becoming more integrated in healthcare?*

### Discussion Overview: Common Questions/Themes

1. Would “common language” only apply to those working in integrated healthcare?
2. A contributing factor to the lack of common language is the generally low standards of educational hours (500) needed to become a massage therapist.
3. How we “talk” helps to build credibility for the profession, regardless of the environment. We as professionals must avoid getting in the habit of ‘dumbing down’ our language within various environments.
4. It is important to know who we are talking to. Language may be different in different situations with different professions.
5. Schools do not always reinforce the use of anatomically based language regardless of whether they are science classes or hands on classes.

There were a few thoughts on how AMTA might engage members on this topic of ‘speaking a common language’:

- Online courses around the topic of language;
- A database of medical terminology;
- Glossary of terms;
- Resource flyer to schools; and
- List of therapists who work in various settings as a resource for others to speak with around language and terminology.

These suggestions will be reiterated in the **Action** section of this report.

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**Discussion Topic: Levels of Education:**

*“As massage therapists, how do we show the measure/accomplishments of our advanced studies and skills in massage education to healthcare professionals and the public?”*

**Discussion Overview: Common Themes**

This was a challenging discussion, partly because this subject is something that AMTA does not have direct control over. There was no conclusion or even common ground within the discussion, however many agreed on the following two points:

1. The need for national standards for education must come first before we can do anything about categorizing continuing education.
2. AMTA is not in the business of policing what people can or cannot do related to their continuing education. Instead, AMTA does have CE requirements and educates the public on qualifications to look for in their MT.

One follow up item related to the national locator service is outlined in the **Action** section of this report.

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**ACTION****Follow up: Online Education Position Statement Idea**

1. The AODAC Chair will consult with appropriate volunteers and staff on developing guidelines for the content of an AMTA position statement.
2. The AODAC Chair will work with Governance Chair and appropriate staff to update the position statement idea workflow document. The updated document will reflect scenarios where a position statement idea that did not move forward for development can be revisited.
3. The AODAC will continue to educate members and delegates on the reasoning behind the changes to position statement idea submissions, as there continues to be some confusion around the process.
4. The AODAC will look at options for delegates to be able to ask questions and request clarifications from the authors of position statements. Currently, unless an author is a delegate they do not have access to the conversations on the delegate forum.

### **Follow Up: Common Language Discussion Topic**

The following items are for consideration by the National President:

1. Recommend that AMTA look at the development of online continuing education around the topic of professional language. Suggest utilizing the Delegate Forum to gather additional information around this idea.
2. Suggestion that AMTA look at developing a database and/or glossary on medical terminology that could be accessed online and would include common terms used in varied environments. If AMTA chooses to look into this, the AODAC suggests that the Delegate Forum be used to gather input.
3. Can AMTA develop material for schools on ways to incorporate/reinforce the learning of professional language? (similar to the flyer currently being distributed to schools related to research)

### **Follow Up: Levels of Education Discussion Topic**

The following item is for consideration by the National President:

1. AMTA's Find a Massage Therapist (FAMT) Locator Service: Consider limiting the number of specialties to no more than three (3) on an FAMT profile. The rationale being that many MT's with less than 5 years' experience will often list 6-8 specialties, which may be misleading to the public on their true skill set.

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### **Observations:**

1. The AOD believes that for this format to be successful and valuable to AMTA, then the discussion topics need to be further defined. Anyone submitting discussion topics should think about what they would like the end-result of the discussion to be. The AODAC plans to look at the discussion topic submission form to see how this might be facilitated.
2. When discussion topics are outside of AMTA's purview (i.e. levels of education) it is hard for there to be a conclusion or end product for the topic or discussion. For the levels of education discussion, having input from NCBTMB might have been helpful to the delegates. The AODAC would like to know if, in the future, gathering input from other organizations

would be possible or beneficial.

3. In 2018 this report asked the question “How is AMTA promoting the value of board and advanced certification?” Based on this year’s discussions, this is still an area that can continue to improve.

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**Summary:** This years’ Assembly of Delegates was, overall, very successful. 83% of delegates gave a top box rating to the question, “How effective was the Assembly of Delegates Meeting in fulfilling its stated purpose?: *The Assembly of Delegates is a group of elected chapter members whose purpose is to provide input on items of interest for the Association as it relates/impacts their state, as outlined per policy.*

The discussions continued to be dynamic, and more individuals had the opportunity to participate in discussions. We are still encountering the problem of delegates not coming to the meeting prepared, which is even more noticeable in this format. It is important to continue to reiterate that being a delegate is a year-round position and should not be an entry-level volunteer position. It is also important for chapter boards to look at ways to hold their delegates accountable for their work. It seems apparent that participation in pre-Assembly activities like the Delegate Forum can make a big difference in the preparedness of a delegate.

Equally important is continuing to educate both delegates and chapters on the new process of the Assembly. It has the potential to be a very dynamic, innovative entity. Its uses can be multifunctional, and it is partly the job of the AODAC to continue to work to assist members and the NBOD to understand its potential. It continues to be a privilege for us to be involved with the Assembly of Delegates.

Submitted with respect by:

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