

Identifying Professional Massage Therapists

FACT SHEET 2



About this fact sheet

Massage therapists, remedial massage therapists and myotherapists (professional qualified therapists) often fill the gap when patients seek alternatives to medications and other therapies because they feel that remedial massage therapy and myotherapy provides a level of relief that is appropriate to their needs.

While a proportion of remedial massage therapy and myotherapy treatments are initiated by patients self-directing their care, many appointments are initiated through a referral from a registered medical practitioner such as a GP, or an allied health practitioner.

Remedial massage therapy and myotherapy is not a cure for disease, injury or chronic condition. However, they can provide relief from pain and stress, improve mobility and help rehabilitation and recovery. Patients should always seek medical advice first when new conditions or pain arises.

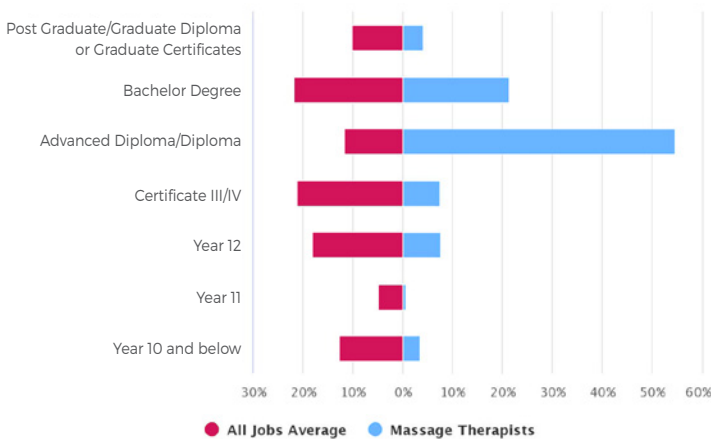
The following will assist you in understanding what a professional qualified therapist is, and how the appropriate training, experience and skills can help in maintaining or restoring a level of health and wellbeing.

Professional remedial massage therapists and myotherapists have recognised formal qualifications

Professional remedial massage therapy and myotherapy is delivered by therapists who have recognised qualifications such as a Bachelor Degree in Health Science, Advanced Diploma of Myotherapy, Diploma of Remedial Massage, or Certificate IV in Massage Therapy Practice, and who undertake at least 1,000 hours of specialty training.

A report published by Endeavour College during February 2021, and undertaken by Australian Online Research, reported on the education levels of therapists for whom massage services were their primary source of income, these are illustrated below:

Figure 1. Qualifications



In 2017, [Steel et al.](#)² described the Australian complementary medicine workforce, including practice and professional characteristics, involving a survey of over 1,300 practitioners. They found that most participants obtained their qualification 10 or more years ago and practiced in a clinical environment alongside at least one other health practitioner from another health profession. These results correlate with the Massage &

Myotherapy Australia's 2023 Practitioners' Survey, which also found increasing demand for higher level remedial massage therapy and myotherapy services including:

- » 20% of therapy consultations are part of General Practitioner (GP) Health Plans
- » Referrals from Registered Health Practitioners were a primary source of work for qualified therapists and include:
 - Allied Health Practitioners 30%
 - Private Health Insurance 15%
 - GP Referrals 12%

Professional remedial massage therapists and myotherapists are qualified members of an accredited association

Membership requirements of the various professional Associations include:

- » set qualification and probity standards for membership
- » accredited training programs for membership purposes
- » ongoing professional development/education requirements
- » current First Aid and, in some cases,
- » Criminal History Check and Working with Children/ Vulnerable Persons Check
- » Third party complaint resolution involving:
 - a code of ethics that members must subscribe to
 - complaints handling services involving health service users about members
 - sanctions for unprofessional conduct, including withdrawal of membership in serious matters.

Like registered health practitioners, professional qualified therapists must also comply with the requirements of Private Health Insurance Funds to achieve accreditation as an [Approved Provider](#). Some may also be a Certified Practitioner™ under Massage & Myotherapy Australia's National Quality Assurance program.



Professional remedial massage therapists and myotherapists meet high level probity standards

The core probity standards required of professional qualified therapists accredited as members of a professional Association such as Massage & Myotherapy Australia, are very similar to the five core registration standards of the [Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency](#) (AHPRA) for the 15 registered health professions.

These include: criminal history police checks, English language skills, recency of practice, and continuing professional development. Professional association membership requires Public and Products Liability Insurance, and Professional Indemnity Insurance.

Like [AHPRA-registered health practitioners](#), professional qualified therapists must adhere to a [Professional Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice](#).

Complaints and concerns can be raised about AHPRA-registered practitioners, as they can be about professional qualified therapists through an independent National Ethics Committee, and underpinned by the National Code of Conduct for Unregistered Healthcare Workers. This Code of Conduct includes state-based health complaints commissioners and health ombudsmen with cross-jurisdictional information-sharing powers.

The remedial massage therapy and myotherapy sector has matured as a professional sector of health

As an industry regulated area of healthcare, the remedial massage therapy and myotherapy sector has matured and developed professionally during the past 15 years. These changes include:

- » A legislated National Code of Conduct for Healthcare Workers
- » State-based health complaints commissioners and health ombudsmen with cross jurisdictional information sharing powers.
- » Review of the Australian Government Rebate on Natural Therapies for Private Health Insurance which recommended the continued inclusion of remedial massage therapy and myotherapy (2015)
- » Creation of a complementary therapies research program - UTS - ARCCIM International Complementary Medicine Research Leadership Program
- » Creation of an ACCC endorsed national Quality Assurance program for professional qualified therapists (Certified Practitioner™)
- » A considerable number of newly published papers attesting to the efficacy of massage in alleviating symptoms of pain and stress and as an aid to maintaining and improving mobility in the aged, those with injuries and those suffering chronic pain or stress.
- » Recognition under the Federal Department of Health and Ageing classification as an 'Allied Health Service' for the purpose of the Aged Care In-Home Care Package Program, NDIS, Private Health Insurance Rebate scheme and worker compensation and rehabilitation schemes.

Remedial massage therapy and myotherapy may or may not be right for everyone, as no two patients respond in the same way, and no two therapists can provide exactly the same treatment.

Endnotes

1. Fine B, Monica Gessner M. Myotherapy Research Summary, Endeavour Interview Participant Pack. [Australia Online Research](#), February 2021.
2. Steel A, Leach M, Wardle J, Sibbritt D, Schloss J, Diezel H, Adams J., The Australian Complementary Medicine Workforce: [A Profile of 1,306 Practitioners from the PRACI Study](#). *J Altern Complement Med*. 2018 Apr;24(4):385-394. doi: 10.1089/acm.2017.0206. Epub 2018 Jan 2. PMID: 29293360.