

Title:

Demand For Massage Therapists Increases As Interest In Benefits Of Massage Creates More Converts

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Summary:

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According to the 2006-2007 Edition of the Occupational Outlook Handbook, published by the U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, the outlook for employment for massage therapists will "increase faster than average" during the period from 2004-2014. The Bureau defines "faster than average" as "increase 18 to 26 perce...

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Article Body:

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Among the reasons for the growing demand for massage therapists, the publication cites "massage therapy's growing acceptance as a medical tool." Apparently, younger Americans appreciate the effectiveness of massage at reducing stress through relaxation and the growing segment of older Americans are experiencing specific therapeutic benefits. The willingness of the "medical provider and insurance industries" to recommend and cover the costs of massage therapy is another growth factor cited by the Bureau.

There are roughly 1,300 massage therapy postsecondary schools, college programs, and training programs throughout the country. After enrolling in a training program, massage therapy students study anatomy, physiology, kinesiology and

other subjects covering the structure and function of the human body. Students must understand how the body works and moves and how the various systems relate and interact.

Students also train in the various massage types, or "modalities," and learn the techniques associated with each form of massage offered by the training institution. There are dozens of unique approaches to massage ranging from techniques that focus on a specific area of the body to techniques that approach the body holistically and consider both physical and mental aspects of health and relaxation.

The U.S. Department of Labor estimates that massage therapists held about 97,000 jobs in 2004. Most massage therapists are self-employed and own their own business. The balance are independent contractors or are employed by businesses that offer massage services. These include spas, health clubs, medical offices and sports organizations.

An aging population and broader acceptance of alternative medical practices will only increase the demand for massage therapists. Baby-boomers will carry their appreciation for massage into their senior years and the elderly, in general, are recognizing the benefits of massage as a support for a more active lifestyle. Businesses have begun offering on-site massage to employees to help deal with on-the-job stress and help improve productivity. Health insurance companies are recognizing the contribution of massage to overall health and many are including massage in their coverage.

The outlook is bright for existing and potential massage therapists. The occupation offers a great deal of flexibility and an opportunity to operate independently. Income levels are fair and growing and the social aspects are quite attractive to those who enjoy helping and interacting with many different people. Enrollment in massage schools is on the rise and good schools, ambitious students and increased demand bode well for future massage therapists.