

Thank You for Your Input: Code of Ethics Survey

May 2019

The College of Massage Therapists of Ontario (CMTO) is in the process of refreshing its Code of Ethics. To update the Code of Ethics, the College developed a survey to engage registrants and other stakeholders in an early discussion about some of the current ethical issues in the practice environment. The survey was launched on January 24, 2019 and closed 60 days later, on March 24, 2019.

CMTO heard from 2534 respondents in total, 2207 of whom answered at least one question. Of these 2207 useable responses, 2187 were CMTO registrants, eight were members of the public, and nine selected “other”.

General Agreement with a List of Proposed Themes

CMTO asked respondents to rate on a scale of 1-5 (1 being “not important at all” and 5 being “extremely important”) whether it was important that the refreshed Code of Ethics include nine offered themes. Here are the themes that the highest percentage of respondents saw as “very important” or “extremely important” to include in the refreshed Code of Ethics:

- align with CMTO’s mission and values by addressing honesty, integrity, respect for others, transparency and accountability (95%);
- explain Massage Therapists’ duty to act with honesty and transparency if harm does occur, and to assume responsibility and initiate steps to minimize the harm (95%);
- be relevant to current practice in Ontario (93%);
- clarify that client abuse includes physical, verbal, sexual and/or financial harassment, bullying and intimidation/threatening behaviours (92%);
- name basic principles of professionalism, including client-centered care, Massage Therapist autonomy, accountability and social justice (89%);
- address the most prevalent ethical issues within CMTO investigations and discipline cases (83%);
- describe ethical concerns related to appropriate billing practices (81%);
- have an accompanying model or template for ethical decision-making to assist Massage Therapists in working through ethical issues and dilemmas encountered in practice (81%); and
- outline Conflict of Interest concepts including real, perceived and/or potential conflicts (77%).

For all these themes, only 0.4% - 4% of respondents indicated that the themes were “not so important” or “not at all important” to include.

Additional Themes from Open-Ended Comments

In the second and final section of the survey, respondents were asked to share any additional ethical dilemmas in Massage Therapy, either real or anticipated. Of the 2207 respondents, 303 (13.7%) offered comments in this section.

The following ethical themes were most popular:

Billing, receipts, and insurance questions (clients requesting inappropriate billing, tipping, billing combined modalities, dual registration)

Interpersonal and reporting issues come up when working with other regulated healthcare practitioners

Importance of discharging clients when client's needs are outside of RMT's knowledge or when client is abusive

Managing abusive clients

Managing a sexual abuse allegation professionally

Clinic hygiene and cleanliness (as it relates to client rights, reporting sub-standard environments)

Confusion, disagreement, frustration with *Regulated Health Professional Act, 1991* requirement to not treat friends and family

Obtaining consent in special client circumstances

Client privacy as an ethical priority

Financial and personal Conflict of Interest examples (such as client wanting to promote their products at clinic, maintaining professional neutrality)

Navigating professional boundaries examples

Client mental health and substance use dilemmas (including consent to treatment, safety of staff and other clients, financial loss from missed appointments)

Mixed thoughts on social justice (some think it is not relevant for a Code of Ethics, while others think RMTs should model equitable treatment of clients from special/minority groups)

Balancing CMTO and employer's requirements

Next steps

CMTO is using this data to develop a draft of the refreshed Code of Ethics (and any accompanying materials). Please look for the announcement for consultation/feedback on that draft over summer 2019. By the end of 2019, CMTO staff hope to release a revised version of the Code of Ethics that incorporates the feedback of registrants and the public – in time to celebrate 100 years of Massage Therapy regulation.