

How to Make Massage Therapy a Successful Part of Your Practice

Teri Sura

Adding massage therapy to your practice doesn't have to be difficult. Setting up your space properly and choosing the right massage therapist are two of the most important steps in the process. Once these two pieces of the puzzle are in place, you will be ready to begin offering [the benefits of massage](#) to your patients and increase the profitability of your practice.

Crafting the Ideal Setting

Start by selecting a dedicated room that is at least 10' x 10'; this ensures there will be enough space for a massage table, small stool, desk or table, and leave room for the therapist to work. Most therapists will incorporate movement around the entire table during their session, so a clear, safe pathway around the edges important. The space you select should be out of the main traffic areas of your office, and in as quiet an area as possible. Ringing phones and loud talking should be avoided. The environment should be serene and relaxing.

Locating close to a reasonably private restroom is desirable, as clients will need to disrobe for the massage. If this is not possible, you will want to include a screen for privacy and a mirror for dressing in the room. Adding lockers, racks or wall hooks for client clothing and personal items is a thoughtful touch. Make sure to offer a space for valuables and glasses as well.



For client comfort, the area should ideally be heated or cooled separately from the office. Massage rooms are often kept cool due to the use of heated pads and blankets on the table. A quiet space heater can also be used to keep the client comfortable.

Choosing a room with a tile or laminate floor will ensure easy clean-up of lotion, oil and cream spills, but may also make the room cooler and echo. Fill in the empty space if you can with plants or pictures. This should help absorb sound and make the room more cozy.

The space should be warm and inviting. Soft colors on the walls, flickering flameless or traditional candles, and soft fleece pads, sheets and face-rest covers invite the client to relax into the table. A small personal stereo or iPod station will enhance the atmosphere with soft music, and eliminate outside noise and interruption.

An important finishing touch is a highly visible sign on or next to the door that designates when the room is in use and not to be disturbed. Noise needs to be kept to a minimum when it is in use. This will ensure the best possible experience for the client.

Recruiting the Ideal Therapist

Now that you have determined the basic space you will dedicate to massage, it is time to consider the therapist who will work best with your practice. If it is an established therapist you seek, referral is the best way to find them. Ask everyone you know, and even patients they currently see. They can even bring existing clients with them when they join your practice.

Another option is to run an online or print ad. This will require a larger time commitment from you and your staff, but it will give you a wide variety of candidates and skill levels from which to choose.

One of the best ways to secure a therapist is through a professional massage school. Finding massage schools in your area is the first step. Community and career colleges are a good place to start, but don't overlook smaller local programs. They often graduate highly skilled therapists from these intense programs. Some schools teach different types of massage than others. A visit to the placement office will help give you some insight into the school and connect you with graduates and students looking for employment.

Once you have narrowed down your top candidates, conduct interviews and check at least two professional references per therapist. It would even be a good idea to schedule a massage with each of them to experience the quality of their treatments. Once you find the therapist you feel will [fit best within your organization](#), begin negotiating as to the type of arrangement that works best for both of you.

In closing, keeping your patients in-house by offering massage therapy supports your work and keeps patient retention and satisfaction high. This also allows you to monitor the quality of the massage experience and ensure that it fits in with your style of patient management and care. Many chiropractic clinics accommodate multiple massage therapy suites, which can generate substantial income. Massage keeps patients in touch with the practice even while you are away, allowing you to reach a much broader patient audience.

JANUARY 2011