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## Clinical Orthopedic Manual Therapy (COMT)

BY DR. JOSEPH MUSCOLINO, DC



### The Role of Assessment

A physician should never treat a patient without an assessment and diagnosis. This same conceptual reasoning could be applied to the world of manual therapy: a therapist should never treat a client without an assessment. This is problematic because many therapists perform their massage without first conducting any type of formal assessment. Indeed, massage is often performed as a preset routine geared toward general wellness. Also, many therapists choose to begin the massage and perform the assessment locally in each region with more of a fluid interplay between assessment and treatment as the massage is performed. Although less clinically oriented, these approaches to performing massage can still be quite valuable.



### Treatment Targets of COMT

There are essentially four major treatment targets for COMT:

- 1) global muscle tension,
- 2) myofascial trigger points (TrPs),
- 3) fascial adhesions, and
- 4) fascial contraction.

The four major targets for COMT presented in this article listed above are the main categories. But subcategories for treatment may include degenerated/torn fascial tissue such as the tendons involved in lateral and medial epicondylitis can be worked therapeutically with COMT: deep cross-fiber friction work can be performed to stimulate an inflammatory effect to encourage fibroblastic activity, thereby increasing scar tissue adhesions to mend the degenerated/torn tissue. Also, acute injuries such as strains, sprains, and bruises can be treated with COMT: cryotherapy treatment and gentle effleurage toward the heart can be effectively used to decrease the swelling present in these conditions.

### Clinical Orthopedic Manual Therapy (COMT)

COMT is manual therapy whose goal is to treat and remedy a specific pathologic condition with which the client presents. And implied in the term orthopedic is that the client presents with a neuro-myo-fascio-skeletal pathologic condition of the body (for example, muscle spasm, tendinitis/tendinosis, or sciatica) as compared to a pathologic condition of metabolism or internal visceral organs (such as diabetes, high blood pressure, or perhaps gastrointestinal complaints).

### Neuro-myo-fascio-skeletal Therapy

The term *neuro-myo-fascio-skeletal* nicely encompasses the importance of all three components, muscular, fascial, and skeletal, to the mechanical functioning of the body. It is valuable to use because it best describes the province of manual therapy. It has long been recognized that manual therapy works on the musculature of the body which creates contractile forces upon the skeletal system. And in recent years, the incredible importance of the fascial system has been recognized along with the nervous system, which is the prime controller of muscle function. Therefore, the term *neuro-myo-fascio-skeletal* is best used because it is most inclusive of both the mechanical and the neurologic functioning of the human body.

continued



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advancing the art,  
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## Deadlines

Fall: September 1  
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Summer: June 1

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## Clinical Orthopedic Manual Therapy (COMT)

continued

### COMT Treatment

So, back to the adage of never treating without an assessment. The value in this concept is hopefully clear. If our goal is to remedy a specific condition, then we must direct our care toward the cause, the underlying mechanism, of the condition. Having an assessment offers us the target for treatment, allowing us to more quickly and efficiently help the client. So a reasonable question might be: What are the underlying mechanisms/conditions that COMT addresses?

*Global muscle tension* describes hypertonicity. Global muscle tone is controlled by the nervous system. Alpha motor neurons from the central nervous system (CNS) direct the contractile tone of a muscle which is, in turn, controlled by muscle spindle activity, which is controlled by the gamma motor system, which ultimately resides in subconscious regions of the brain. As a result, muscle tone is not located within musculature; rather it is located within the brain. Consequently, *muscle memory*, which describes the memory of the body to engage musculature for pre-learned postural and movement patterns resides in the brain, not in the musculature itself.

There are many reasons why the CNS might order a muscle to contract. Often it is due to a protective reaction by the CNS to tighten a muscle that is physically stressed, excessive stretching, excessive contraction, and prolonged contraction,

Physical trauma, such as a macrotrauma or ischemia can also stress and injure the muscle, resulting in a protective contraction by the CNS. The CNS may also increase a muscle's tone due to the muscle being held for prolonged periods of time in a shortened and slackened position; this response is known as *adaptive shortening*.

The CNS also often orders a muscle to contract as a splinting mechanism to protect a nearby tissue that the CNS considers to be vulnerable or injured. Most often it is an adjacent joint that is being protected; by contracting the muscle, the joint cannot be moved and is afforded a chance to rest and heal. Sometimes the CNS directs a muscle to contract due to pain or dysfunction in a nearby internal visceral organ. For example, appendicitis can result in splinting/hypertonicity of the anterior abdominal wall.

And finally, muscle contraction, once present for a prolonged period of time for whatever reason, may become patterned and entrenched within the CNS due to the process of *neural plasticity* in which functional and structural changes occur within the neuronal pathways of the CNS that facilitate muscular contraction. In these cases, even if the actual cause of the muscle spasm were no longer present, the increased muscle tone would continue due to neural plasticity.

Therefore, when treating a client's globally tight musculature, although it is important to treat the muscle for its own sake to relieve the internal tension of the hypertonicity, if the underlying cause of the tightness is not assessed and addressed, the global muscle tension will return and the client's condition will not be resolved.

*These details and more are covered in the courses taught on COMT, of which AMTA-NY has been a proud supporter. You may have missed registration for the September classes, but Joe will be teaching at the NYS convention in the spring. Look for the alerts and register for additional knowledge from this amazing practitioner.*

## President's Corner

BY NICHOLAS BODKIN, LMT, AMTA-NY CHAPTER PRESIDENT



Over the last year, I have been emphasizing aspects of the AMTA experience, specifically highlighting the networking and educational opportunities the association provides to our members as well as the AMTA member experience. As the season begins to change, I'd like to shift my message to focus on our mission

statement: "To serve AMTA Members while Advancing the Art, Science, and Practice of Massage Therapy." This statement is our purpose, and the basis for all decisions that guide our chapter. I believe, as members, we need to frequently reflect on these words because it can help us elevate our standards of practice and professionalism. We have all seen examples of how the profession has been associated with illicit activities, and as a result, many therapists from across the country and even here in New York have had to face discriminatory planning, zoning and local laws regulating the practice of massage therapy. Now more than ever we need to reflect on our mission to advance the art, science and practice of massage therapy. We need to do our part to represent ourselves as the health care professionals that we are. I encourage all of you to continue pursuing quality education and professional development. Participate in your local networking events and meet with your local health care community partners. One thing I have learned in business is that professional relationships take time, trust and respect. Take every opportunity to build your professional networks and in time people will get to know you. Remember we are not just representing ourselves, we are creating the future of the profession.

I wish all of you a happy upcoming holiday season!

## 2020 Student Scholarship Essay Contest

BY MELANIE R. OLIVIERI RN, LMT, AMTA NY BOD, SCHOLARSHIP CHAIR



### You Gotta Be In It To Win It!

Did you know that AMTA NY runs a Scholarship Essay competition every year?

We offer \$1000, \$600 and \$400 scholarships to help students fund their education. You must be a NY massage student in good standing, enrolled in a NYS accredited school, and, all you need to do, is write an essay on one of the subjects listed. Be sure to follow the stated rules and you could be a scholarship winner.

Notifications will be coming out soon so watch your email! Winners will be announced at the NY Convention in the May.

The recipients of 2019's scholarships went to students from Finger Lakes School of Massage, Pacific College of Oriental Medicine and Finger Lakes Community College.

You could be one of our 2020 winners! Good Luck!

**AMTA National also runs a student scholarship contest, check it out at [www.amtamassage.org](http://www.amtamassage.org).**

## Save-The-Date

**2020 AMTA-NY ANNUAL CONVENTION**

May 1-3, 2020 | Saratoga Springs, NY



# Education Corner

BY PAT COLLINS, LMT, EDUCATION CHAIR



It's time to save the date for the AMTA-NY Chapter's biggest education event of the year! Saratoga is the place to be on May 1-3, 2020 for the AMTA-NY Chapter Convention.

Cynthia Ribeiro will be teaching about the Role of the SI joint in Low Back Pain as well as other neuromuscular classes. Reviews from Cynthia's last presentations included comments like "Life Changing!" "Awesome!" and "my practice won't be the same!"

Dr. Joe Muscolino will be teaching Clinical Orthopedic Manual Therapy classes and Ruth Werner, the author of the pathology books you probably used in massage school, will be presenting some excellent lecture classes including "Using Research to Market Your Practice."

Kerry D'Ambrogio will be teaching a full weekend of Fascial Balancing. David Lobenstine will teach us rocking techniques, ways to use our breath to help our practice and several other classes. And (drumroll please!) ...James Waslaski will be back!

And it's our pleasure to give the gift of CEH's to our members by offering no-fee courses by our own Jenn Sommerman. She will be teaching an ethics class and a marketing class on the Thursday before convention starts.

## Last Chance For Cupping Level 1

Don't miss your last chance this year to take Cupping 1. It will be offered for the last time this year on November 8 – 10 at the RIT Conference Center in Henrietta, NY (near Rochester). The instructor is Garrett Brown from ACE Cupping.

We will be offering Cupping 2 on February 7 to 9 in Vestal (near Binghamton) and naturally, Cupping 1 will be a prerequisite.

Garrett Brown specializes in post-surgery, chronic pain, scars, burns, breast cancer, and other medical massage and he will teach you to incorporate cupping into your own practice – "medical" or relaxation. Lymph drainage using cups is also included in this class.

I took Garrett's Cupping 1 class when AMTA-NY offered it this summer and it has completely changed my practice! I use cupping on almost every client now! Cupping is a miracle at quickly releasing scar tissue, as well as chronic or deep trigger points and hypertonicities. Two students in the class cried with relief that they won't have to complete their retirement plans for a while because of this easy-on-the-hands, effective tool!

Don't miss out on this phenomenal class that will help your clients and you!



**Garrett Brown specializes in post-surgery, chronic pain, scars, burns, breast cancer, and other medical massage**



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Mark your calendars to SAVE THE DATE!



## Online CEH's

**Did you know you can complete all of your NYS required CEH's through online approved providers?** AMTA is an approved provider for NYS continuing education and offers more than 50 online classes. Classes are in a variety of subjects and are as low as \$15 per credit hour.

For more information visit: [www.amtamassage.org/courses](http://www.amtamassage.org/courses)

# If You See Something Great.... Nominate!

BY ED PAYCNA, LMT, AWARDS CHAIR



AMTA NY would like your nominations for award recipients that you believe demonstrate great qualities in the following categories:

## Government Relations Award

The Government Relations award honors a recipient who has provided exceptional contributions at the National and/or Chapter level regarding government relations activities related to massage therapy.

The recipient does not have to be a member of AMTA or a massage therapist or have participated at the National and/or Chapter level in government relations.

## Sports Massage Achiever Award

This award is given to an AMTA member to honor and acknowledge their accomplishments by increasing the visibility, prestige and acceptance of sports massage in the industry and the community at large.

## Meritorious Award

The meritorious award is given to an AMTA member who diligently volunteers and gives of their time in an altruistic manner.

## Humanitarian Award

The Humanitarian Award is given to an AMTA member to acknowledge their commitment and passion with the "heart" of massage in action!

They must volunteer, which may or may not include massage, in the larger community. Including but not limited to: charity, church, supporting the arts, working with children, disabled, needy, sick, homeless, elderly, community outreach to populations for whom massage is otherwise difficult to obtain; fundraising for same, consciousness raising, relief efforts.

## Teacher of the Year Award

The Teacher of the Year nominee should manifest unquestionable dedication and commitment to the future and excellence of massage education. Nominee must have been a teacher for a minimum of 5 years in the massage therapy department at an AMTA member school.

*All winners will be chosen and approved from nominations submitted to the awards committee and/or president. The recipient will receive recognition at the AMTA-NY state convention in Saratoga Springs May 2nd.*

**Nomination deadline: March 1, 2020.**

Please submit to: [awards@amta-ny.org](mailto:awards@amta-ny.org)

# CSMT Corner

BY TC PELLETIER, LMT, CSMT CHAIR



## I Invite You to Become Part of Our Community Service Massage Team Family

As massage therapists, we all know the value of working with others. Ours is a caring and personal profession. We regularly see the benefits of our work and our compassion in the lives of our clients. What we do goes beyond science and anatomy, and as caring professionals we have skills to offer that are far more valuable than many outside our profession truly understand.

Becoming part of the Community Service Massage Team is an opportunity to spread the benefits of our work and educate others about the value of massage. It's also a rewarding way to practice our

skills, interact with and learn from our colleagues, and do what we do best – bring a little positivity into the lives of others. As a CSMT volunteer, I have personally found that taking the time out of my day-to-day life to perform massage at events that raise money for charity or offer support to those struggling with health issues has brought me an appreciation of what I can contribute to the lives of others that I sometimes overlook in my working life.

So please consider joining the Community Service Massage Team. If you are interested in joining us and spreading just a little more warmth into the world, please go to the [www.amtanewyork.org](http://www.amtanewyork.org) website and click on Community Service Massage Team in the Volunteer drop down or contact me at [csmt@amta-ny.org](mailto:csmt@amta-ny.org)

# Scam Alert

## Please be aware of phone, texting and email scams.

Your AMTA chapter will **never** request that you purchase anything on their behalf for donation or otherwise. If you ever get such a request from anyone saying they represent AMTA, please contact our chapter office using the contact information in this newsletter or on our chapter website.

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### Discover Upledger CranioSacral Therapy...

"Great experience. As a massage instructor and having been the director of a massage school, I appreciated how well all aspects of this workshop came together - admin and curriculum."

— Natalie K., LMT

#### Upcoming Classes:

CRANIOSACRAL THERAPY 1 (CS1)

Rochester, NY

Dec 5-8, 2019

Philadelphia, PA

Jan 9-12, 2020

Albany, NY

Mar 12-15, 2020

White Plains, NY

May 28-31, 2020

CRANIOSACRAL THERAPY 2 (CS2)

Albany, NY

Mar 12-15, 2020

NJ Shore, NJ

Apr 23-26, 2020

White Plains, NY

May 14-17, 2020

SOMATOEMOTIONAL RELEASE 1 (SER1)

White Plains, NY

May 28-31, 2020

DEVELOPING AND DEEPENING CST

PRESENCE (DDCSP)

Hartford, CT

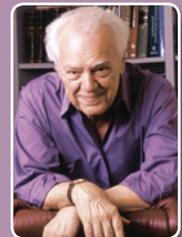
Nov 7-10, 2019

CST APPLICATIONS FOR CONCEPTION,

PREGNANCY AND BIRTHING (CCPB1)

Hartford, CT

Mar 26-29, 2020



John E. Upledger, DO, OMM,  
developer of  
CranioSacral Therapy

Additional dates/locations:

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Sign-on bonus for full-time Massage Therapists available until Dec. 31, 2019.



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## 2020 AMTA-NY ANNUAL CONVENTION

May 1-3, 2020 | Saratoga Springs, NY

## Useful Links

### AMTA National Office

[www.amtamassage.org](http://www.amtamassage.org)

### NYS Education Department Office of the Professions

[www.op.nysed.gov/prof/mt](http://www.op.nysed.gov/prof/mt)

### Massage Therapy Journal

[www.amtamassage.org/journal/home.html](http://www.amtamassage.org/journal/home.html)

### Massage & Bodywork Magazine

[www.massagemag.com](http://www.massagemag.com)

### Massage Today

[www.massagetoday.com](http://www.massagetoday.com)

### MASSAGE THERAPY FOUNDATION

[www.massagetherapyfoundation.org](http://www.massagetherapyfoundation.org)

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### YouTube

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