



Position Statement: HIV Positive Therapists/Patients

Position

HIV is a virus that selectively targets the host's immune system. HIV is a fragile virus that does not survive well outside a host body. HIV is spread through the exchange of body fluids; blood, semen, vaginal secretions, and breast milk. It may also be transmitted via the maternal-fetal system.

HIV is not transmitted by sweat, tears or saliva nor through normal person to person contact. The intact skin provides a secure barrier against HIV.

Massage Therapy is beneficial to a patient's emotional well-being as well as increasing immune system function which can serve to ward off secondary infections.

Guidelines

MTAA members must treat HIV positive patients with the same dignity, professionalism and respect offered to all patients.

MTAA members who are HIV positive are not required to disclose this to patients as the method of providing Massage Therapy is not an activity that is considered a transmission point for the virus. HIV positive Massage Therapists are required to ensure that they are hyper-vigilant in providing a barrier when the skin surfaces that are to be in contact with the patient are not intact.

When providing a Massage Therapy treatment to a person who is HIV positive, considerable care must be given to the sanitation of the surrounding environment. This pertains to any and all surfaces that are to be in contact with the patient including the massage table, sheets, pillows and any other items used during the course of treatment. Due to the immunosuppression related to this disease, it is imperative that the Massage Therapist adhere to MTAA standards of practice to ensure patient safety when cleaning surrounding surfaces after and prior to patient care. If there is a break in tissue for either the patient or therapist, the standards for universal care will then apply. If the break occurs during the course of a treatment, the treatment is to stop and the application of universal care applies.

The Massage Therapist Association of Alberta leads the practice of its members in Alberta. Contact us for more information on this or other position statements.

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