

**AMTA Assembly of Delegates
Position Statement Idea Submission Form**

Name of Submitter(s) and AMTA Chapter if applicable:

Whitney Lowe; Oregon Chapter
Academy of Clinical Massage

Date Submitted:

April, 2019

IDEA Proposal:

Clearly state (one sentence maximum) the IDEA that you feel warrants consideration as a potential Position Statement of AMTA. This IDEA should be significantly different from any existing AMTA Position Statement.

Online education is an appropriate method to deliver curriculum content for non-psychomotor subjects in massage therapy entry-level training and continuing education.

Summary Rationale:

Why should AMTA have a Position Statement related to this Idea?

Online education has become a very effective delivery method for a wide variety of subject areas. As of 2018, one third of all college students were taking at least one course online. Numerous states currently have prohibitions written into their licensure laws against the use of online education in the entry-level curriculum and/or continuing education. In some states, only a designated number of hours can be online. In other states, none of the content can be delivered online.

The psychomotor (hands-on) skills needed to learn massage therapy are best taught in the physical classroom environment. However, there is no reason that cognitive-based subjects such as anatomy, physiology, kinesiology, ethics, business, pathology, documentation, treatment planning, hygiene, or theory cannot be taught online. In fact, as an instructor in both the online and physical classrooms, I would argue that many of these cognitive subjects can be taught far better in the online environment with well-designed online courses.

For over two decades, research has shown that online education is just as effective, and in many instances more effective, than classroom-based coursework. The vast majority of colleges and universities offer numerous courses online, and many prestigious schools offer entire degrees that are fully online.

Many of those behind the prohibitions against online education view our profession as one oriented around hands-on learning. This idea is accurate for the essential physical skills of massage. There is no reason these other cognitive-based subjects mentioned above can't be taught in an online environment, especially if the course methodologies are well constructed. Prohibiting online education limits training options for students and professionals. Most other allied health professions have online education integrated into their educational strategies. Currently the massage therapy profession is falling

significantly behind in making these educational advances.

It is important for AMTA to have a position statement on this topic because many stakeholders in our profession look to AMTA for leadership on issues like this. AMTA has remained an organization that supports evidence-informed decisions and research-based scholarship to make key decisions. The research on learning through online delivery methods is clear and a position statement from AMTA supporting the evidence-based perspective of online education would help support necessary legislative changes. Opening up greater opportunities for online education in our field will help us stay current and innovative in our educational strategies and will continually help make our training available to students that might have a hard time meeting the in-class requirements and thereby choose not to enter or stay in the profession.

Research:

1. U.S. Department of Education, Means B, Toyama Y, Murphy R, Bakia M, Jones K. Evaluation of Evidence-Based Practices in Online Learning: A Meta-Analysis and Review of Online Learning Studies.; 2010.
2. Nguyen T. The Effectiveness of Online Learning : Beyond No Significant Difference and Future Horizons. MERLOT J Online Learn Teach. 2015;11(2):309-319.
3. Hugenholtz NI, de Croon EM, Smits PB, van Dijk FJ, Nieuwenhuijsen K. Effectiveness of e-learning in continuing medical education for occupational physicians. Occup Med. 2008;58(5):370-372. doi:kqn053 [pii]10.1093/occmed/kqn053.
4. Means B, Toyama Y, Murphy R, Baki M. The Effectiveness of Online and Blended Learning: A Meta-Analysis of the Empirical Literature. Teach Coll Rec. 2013;115(030303):1-47. doi:10.3991/ijac.v3i2.1322.
5. Ni AY. Comparing the Effectiveness of Classroom and Online Learning: Teaching Research Methods. J Public Aff Educ. 2013;19(2):199-215. doi:10.1080/15236803.2013.12001730.

Research Summary:

- Extensive research has been published over the last two decades comparing the outcomes from online coursework with those of classroom-based courses.
- The studies reported in the literature are not only isolated reports but include several meta-analysis studies that have examined large numbers of studies in reaching their conclusions.
- The resounding conclusion from these studies is that online education is at least as effective (and in many instances more effective) than classroom-based courses.
- Many of these studies have been conducted in the health professions and show direct applicability to similar issues we face in massage therapy.
- Prohibiting online education in massage therapy shuts off access to educational options that may impair an individual's ability to meet CE requirements or pose additional hardship on students at entry-level trying to balance complex work/life/school schedules. For the latter

group, it may dissuade some people from entering the profession if the demands of school training schedules are more flexible in other allied health professions they may also be considering as career options.

- AMTA has always been a leader on legislative issues facing our profession. In many instances, legislative action is not proactive, but reactive. Unfortunately, in the instance of online education, the legislative reaction that has been encouraged by many state massage boards has been to react in a negative fashion to online education and as a result to craft legislation that was limiting or biased against this form of educational delivery.