



## SPELLING IT OUT

As human beings we need to articulate our world in order to share it with others. This self-definition is something the massage therapy profession hasn't done in a formal way and the inability, or unwillingness, to do so may be hurting it.

The vast majority of you are free spirits and you tell us the indescribable qualities of the work are what you find rewarding. You're not keen about being actively involved in academic discussions about the profession, so you leave it up to us to keep you updated. In that spirit, I want to let you know about a number of discussions going on right now about defining the profession—particularly intriguing as we present this issue that talks about the tangibles and intangibles of being an MT.

The parties involved want to find commonalities among the breadth that is bodywork and outline what therapists need to know in order to practice skillfully, effectively, and safely. At first glance it may be easy to dismiss this goal as political posturing, but it's important to not let our inherent alliances and perceptions of the messengers get in the way of the message itself. If the profession is going to continue to grow and develop, there needs to be a common understanding about what it is practitioners do, how they do it, and how that practice relates to client health.

The imperative for this mission is broader than the profession itself. The end result will enable massage therapists to secure their rightful place at the complementary health table. There are forums where MTs are being asked to work with other manual therapists and agree upon common language. For instance, consider the difference between what a deep-tissue practitioner means by the word *manipulate* versus what a chiropractor means. This is no easy task, but the most worthwhile ventures are rarely simple. The end result stands to benefit everyone from the independent practitioners to high-profile continuing education providers and, perhaps most importantly, the clients.

At this initial stage of definition, much of the debate evolves around who's going to own the discussion—much like deciding who owns the wind and the rain. We all have a responsibility for it, but none of us has ownership. In the future, we'll be able to give you more information about how to join the dialogue. Until then, please enjoy this issue and consider how the indescribable nature of your work can translate into creating a healthier, more productive you.

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