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ISSN 1999-8084. Printed in Canada. Massage Therapy is published four times a year: January, April, July, November. Published and printed by Annex Publishing & Printing Inc., 101 Donly Drive South, Simcoe, ON N3Y 4N5. Occasionally, Massage Therapy Canada will mail information on behalf of industry-related groups whose products and services we believe may be of interest to you. If you prefer not to receive this information, please contact our circulation department. No part of the editorial content of this publication may be reprinted without the publisher’s written permission. ©2017. Annex Publishing & Printing Inc. All rights reserved. Opinions expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of the editor or the publisher. No liability is assumed for errors or omissions. All advertising is subject to the publisher’s approval. Such approval does not imply any endorsement of the products or services advertised. Publisher reserves the right to refuse advertising that does not meet the standards of the publication.
Great inventions

“The first step is to establish that something is possible – then probability will occur.” These are words from tech billionaire Elon Musk, one of the biggest innovators of the 21st century.

Everything that we enjoy today - the gadgets, the Internet, smart appliances and devices - began as a concept that came to fruition because someone acted on that idea. In the last several decades, we have seen so many advances in technology than at any other point in history, and they have significantly changed the way we live, the way we communicate, the way we do our jobs and the way we find personal fulfillment.

It is also interesting to note that some of the greatest inventions in recent history were not exactly products of eccentric geniuses that locked themselves up in a room trying to solve complex equations, with unkempt hair and wrinkly collars yelling, “Eureka!” everyday they make a breakthrough. The most innovative ideas and inventions in the last century began from ordinary people, either trying to find solutions to our day-to-day challenges or challenging the way we traditionally do things.

Mark Zuckerberg was a university student who wanted to find a way to communicate more effectively with other students at Harvard University – so Facebook was born. Amazon began as a website that only sold books that were being shipped from its CEO Jeff Bezos’ garage.

Great inventors and innovators can come from different walks of life, professions and backgrounds. In our cover story, we feature one such innovator who hails from the massage therapy profession. Her passion for her patients and their wellbeing drove Cheryl Mazak to develop a device that aims to help alleviate people’s hand and wrist pain.

It is likely many others in the profession are engaged in some form of innovative and groundbreaking initiatives in varying degrees. We at Massage Therapy Canada would like to hear about them and perhaps share them with our readers. Just send us an email – another great modern invention.
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5 ways business owners should be more like a pencil

The list of traits and characteristics a successful business owner needs to have never seems to end. From selling skills to time management – it seems we all need help in becoming something we’re not. And while some might say this can be a complicated effort, I believe it can be so effortless, a regular pencil can be a source of inspiration.

Here are five sure ways we should all try to be more like the world’s most popular and widely used writing instrument.

**Be adaptable.** A pencil works equally well regardless of who uses it. Business leaders who embrace this concept will build stronger networks, experience greater loyalty, and be viewed as an irreplaceable asset.

**Make mistakes.** Even a pencil knows mistakes can and will happen. That is why it has an eraser on the other side of its writing tip. Mistakes should not be viewed as failures, but rather as guides toward success. However, with such a small eraser that can run out if used too frequently, we must remember to try to never make the same mistakes twice.

**It’s what’s inside that counts.** Regardless of what colour, size or shape a pencil might be, it is all about the lead inside that gives it the ability to write. People sometimes tend to judge others based on superficial stereotypes. If individuals can look past their differences and start focusing on the similarities, we might all be surprised how many new relationships can enrich our lives.

**Stay sharp.** For a pencil to work its best, it must always be sharpened. However, making sure we are always at our best can sometimes take us out of our comfort zone. Learning new technologies, adapting to a new corporate culture, or entering a new industry can be challenging – and even frustrating. But the alternative is becoming like a dull pencil – which no one ever wants to use.

**Leave your mark.** A pencil can write on virtually any surface, giving it the ability to leave its mark wherever it goes. Successful people will tell you one of their most important skills is being able to leave their mark on others. This can range from sharing knowledge and offering positive feedback, to just making an effort to remember someone’s name. Which is easy to do if you write it down – with a pencil.

— Marc Gordon
MENTAL HEALTH

Mindfulness helps anxious people have better focus: study

Just 10 minutes of daily mindful meditation can help prevent one’s mind from wandering and is particularly effective for people who tend to have repetitive, anxious thoughts, according to a study from the University of Waterloo.

The study, which assessed the impact of meditation with 82 participants who experience anxiety, found that developing an awareness of the present moment reduced incidents of repetitive, off-task thinking, a hallmark of anxiety.

“Our results indicate that mindfulness training may have protective effects on mind wandering for anxious individuals,” said Mengran Xu, a researcher and PhD candidate at Waterloo. “We also found that meditation practice appears to help anxious people to shift their attention from their own internal worries to the present-moment external world, which enables better focus on a task at hand.”

Study participants were asked to perform a task on a computer while experiencing interruptions to gauge their ability to stay focused on the task. Researchers then put the participants into two groups at random, with the control group given an audio story to listen to and the other group asked to engage in a short meditation exercise prior to being reassessed.

The study, co-authored by Waterloo psychology professors Christine Purdon and Daniel Smilek and Harvard University’s Paul Selig, was published in Consciousness and Cognition.

HEALTH CARE

Long health care wait times cost Canadians $1.7 billion: study

VANCOUVER – Long wait times for surgery and medical treatment cost Canadians $1.7 billion—or $1,759 per patient—in lost wages and time last year, according to a new study by the Fraser Institute, a public policy think-tank.

The study calculated the average personal cost of time lost during the work week in Canada last year for the estimated 973,505 patients waiting for treatments across 12 medical specialties including general surgery, orthopedic surgery, and neurosurgery.

“Long wait times have real consequences for many Canadians who, in addition to experiencing increased pain and suffering, may lose income from not working and may also be unable to fully enjoy time spent with family and friends,” said Bacchus Barua, senior economist at the Fraser Institute’s Centre for Health Policy Studies.

When calculations were extended to include the value of time outside the traditional work week—weekends—the estimated cost of waiting jumps from $1.7 billion to $5.2 billion, or from $1,759 to about $5,360 per patient.

The study drew data from the Fraser Institute’s Waiting Your Turn study, an annual survey of Canadian physicians who, in 2016, reported a median wait time from specialist appointment to treatment of 10.6 weeks—three weeks longer than what physicians consider clinically reasonable.

According to Fraser Institute, the $1.7 billion in costs identified in the study were likely a conservative estimate because they didn’t include the 9.4 week long wait to see a specialist after getting a referral from a general practitioner. Taken together, the median wait time in Canada for medical treatment was 20 weeks in 2016.

“As long as lengthy wait times define Canada’s health-care system, patients will continue to pay a price in the form of lost wages and reduced quality of life,” Barua said.

Because wait times and incomes vary by province, so does the cost of waiting for health care. Residents of Nova Scotia in 2016 faced the highest private cost of waiting per patient ($2,611), followed by British Columbia ($2,300) and Alberta ($2,188).

Average value of time lost during the workweek in 2016 for patient waiting for medically necessary treatment (by province) were as follows:

- British Columbia: $2,300
- Alberta: $2,188
- Saskatchewan: $1,216
- Manitoba: $1,806
- Ontario: $1,410
- Quebec: $1,152
- New Brunswick: $2,065
- Nova Scotia: $2,611
- Prince Edward Island: $1,159
- Newfoundland and Labrador: $1,605

NEWS

PM says governments must find lasting solution to opioid epidemic

OTTAWA – Prime Minister Justin Trudeau says governments won’t rest until they turn the tide on a rising opioid epidemic.

Health officials and political leaders have been sounding the alarm about a dramatic spike in opioid deaths across Canada—the focus of a national summit in Ottawa last fall that pulled together experts from across the country.

Municipal leaders are lobbying the federal government in Ottawa recently for more help and resources to respond to what they describe as an epidemic spreading through their communities.

Trudeau says the government is listening to municipal concerns and plans to work with local officials to develop long-term solutions to this crisis.

The prime minister made the comments during a keynote address to the annual meeting of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. As part of that meeting, mayors are pushing federal officials and cabinet ministers on a number of files, including opioids, affordable housing and infrastructure spending.

—The Canadian Press
Stroke patients who learned to use their minds to open and close a device fitted over their paralyzed hands gained some control over their hands, according to a new study from Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis.

By mentally controlling the device with the help of a brain-computer interface, participants trained the uninjured parts of their brains to take over functions previously performed by injured areas of the brain, the researchers said.

“We have shown that a brain-computer interface using the uninjured hemisphere can achieve meaningful recovery in chronic stroke patients,” said Dr. Eric Leuthardt, a professor of neurosurgery, neuroscience, biomedical engineering, and mechanical engineering and applied science, and the study’s co-senior author.

The study was published May 26 in the journal Stroke.

In the first weeks after a stroke, people rapidly recover some abilities, but their progress typically plateaus after about three months.

“We chose to evaluate the device in patients who had their first stroke six months or more in the past because not a lot of gains are happening by that point,” said co-senior author Dr. Thy Huskey, an associate professor of neurology at the School of Medicine and program director of the Stroke Rehabilitation Center of Excellence at The Rehabilitation Institute of St. Louis. “Some lose motivation. But we need to continue working on finding technology to help this neglected patient population.”

David Bundy, the study’s first author, worked to take advantage of a quirk in how the brain controls movement of the limbs. In general, areas of the brain that control movement are on the opposite side of the body from the limbs they control. But about a decade ago, Leuthardt and Bundy, who is now a postdoctoral researcher at University of Kansas Medical Center, discovered that a small area of the brain played a role in planning movement on the same side of the body.

To move the left hand, they realized, specific electrical signals indicating movement planning first appear in a motor area on the left side of the brain. Within milliseconds, the right-sided motor areas become active, and the movement intention is translated into actual contraction of muscles in the hand.

A person whose left hand and arm are paralyzed has sustained damage to the motor areas on the right side of the brain. But the left side of the person’s brain is frequently intact, meaning many stroke patients can still generate the electrical signal that indicates an intention to move. The signal, however, goes nowhere since the area that executes the movement plan is out of commission.

“The idea is that if you can couple those motor signals that are associated with moving the same-sided limb with the actual movements of the hand, new connections will be made in your brain that allow the uninjured areas of your brain to take over control of the paralyzed hand,” Leuthardt said.

That’s where the Ipsihand, a device developed by Washington University scientists, comes in. The Ipsihand comprises a cap that contains electrodes to detect electrical signals in the brain, a computer that amplifies the signals, and a movable brace that fits over the paralyzed hand. The device detects the wearer’s intention to open or close the paralyzed hand, and moves the hand in a pincer-like grip, with the second and third fingers bending to meet the thumb.

“Of course, there’s a lot more to using your arms and hands than this, but being able to grasp and use your opposable thumb is very valuable,” Huskey said. “Just because your arm isn’t moving exactly as it was before, it’s not worthless. We can still interact with the world with the weakened arm.”

Leuthardt played a key role in elucidating the basic science, and he worked with Daniel Moran, a professor of biomedical engineering at Washington University School of Engineering & Applied Science, to develop the technology behind the Ipsihand. He and Moran co-founded the company Neurolutions Inc. to continue developing the Ipsihand, and Leuthardt serves on the company’s board of directors. Neurolutions funded this study.

To test the Ipsihand, Huskey recruited moderately to severely impaired stroke patients and trained them to use the device at home. The participants were encouraged to use the device at least five days a week, for 10 minutes to two hours a day. Thirteen patients began therapy, but three dropped out due to unrelated health issues, poor fit of the device or inability to comply with the time commitment. Ten patients completed the study.

Participants underwent a standard motor skills evaluation at the start of the study and every two weeks throughout. The test measured their ability to grasp, grip and pinch with their hands, and to make large motions with their arms. Among other things, participants were asked to pick up a block and place it atop a tower, fit a tube around a smaller tube, and move their hands to their mouths. Higher scores indicated better function.

After 12 weeks of using the device, the patients’ scores increased an average of 6.2 points on a 57-point scale.

“An increase of six points represents a meaningful improvement in quality of life,” Leuthardt said. “For some people, this represents the difference between being unable to put on their pants by themselves and being able to do so.”

Each participant also rated his or her ability to use the affected arm and his or her satisfaction with the skills. Self-reported abilities and satisfaction significantly improved over the course of the study.

How much each patient improved varied, and the degree of improvement did not correlate with time spent using the device. It did correlate with how well the device read brain signals and converted them into hand movements.

Neurosurgery resident Jarod Roland, MD, tries out a device that detects electrical activity in his brain and causes his hand to open and close in response to brain signals.
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Given G. Cortes, RMT, Little Current, ON

This course was exactly what I had been looking for – it was challenging, motivating and interactive. I was able to implement new skills and concepts learned immediately after the first unit and two years later I am still evolving and expanding my treatments combining acupuncture and massage therapy. Best of all, graduates have access to ongoing support and feedback from clinical instructors and staff, which I have found to be priceless.

Tonia Nisbet, RMT, Sarnia, ON

The McMaster Contemporary Medical Acupuncture program provides a modern medical interpretation of an age old treatment modality, helping to explain some of the mysticism associated with traditional acupuncture. The integration of acupuncture with modern neurophysiological concepts, neuroanatomy, functional assessment and evidence based protocols provided me with a wealth of practical knowledge that could be immediately integrated into my practice with astonishing results. The clarity, content and presentation of the curriculum, as well as the faculty, are second to none. Classroom lectures, practical workshops with countless supervised needle insertions and invaluable hands-on anatomy lab instruction created a well-rounded educational experience that left me feeling completely confident in my abilities.

I can’t say enough about your program! I will definitely be back for your advanced courses.

Ken Ansell, RMT, Regina, SK

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UNIT 4 - November 10-11-12, 2017
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Self-care. Self-renewal. They are vague concepts we push on our clients for their ‘take-home’ after a massage treatment. It all seems so achievable at the moment – but where to begin? Axe-throwing? A grown-up bouncy castle? As massage therapists, are we taking note of our own homework? Are we implementing our grand ideas for meditation and Epsom soaks? A quick poll among colleagues usually reveals how infrequently we follow our own advice. When did you last have a massage? Sleep-in? Exercise four times a week? Eat mindfully?

It all starts with a ‘To Don’t’ list. As a Virgo, I’m notorious for making lists. It’s my default setting. To Don’t lists are even more satisfying, though, because they give you permission to say no and be the centre of attention. Don’t turn on your phone. Don’t get sucked into another mindless Netflix series. Don’t give up your long run to take that extra last-minute shift.

Once you start To-Don’t-ing, you’ll be amazed at the time you’ve created to explore, unwind and indulge. Meditation can take many forms and self-renewal doesn’t have to involve yoga or pea sprouts or green tea (unless you like that sort of thing).

Here are six ways to start self-nourishing:

Smooth transition. Kick-start your day with a Green Sparkle Smoothie. Joy McCarthy is the Founder of Joyous Health, a certified holistic nutritionist, best-selling author and TV personality. Her latest book, Joyous Detox, was designed as a plan and cookbook for detoxing naturally every day. Her recipes are gluten-free, dairy-free, refined sugar-free and emphasize specific detox-friendly foods that are simply delicious and fully nourishing.

Sensory overload. Skip Netflix, get a Nature Fix. Florence Williams’ marvelous book, The Nature Fix: Why Nature Makes us Happier, Healthier, and More Creative, is the emotional equivalent of Arnica. The lesson is easy to digest: “The more nature, the better you feel.” It may sound folksy, but, after a walk in the woods, I think you’ll agree with her. The sensory appeal of wet earth, cedar, bird song and a panting dog at your side is the perfect balm for all that ails you. We all suffer from “epidemic dislocation from the outdoors” to some degree, and it’s a fun one to combat.

Sensory deprivation. Maybe you want sensory deprivation instead. The Rest Nest Float Club in Yorkville (Toronto) promises the “incredible stress-melting sensation of nothing at all.” Float pods create a sanctuary like no other. Float in 10 inches of water containing over 800 pounds of dissolved magnesium salts. No light. No sound. Here, you can “eliminate sensory inputs” and disappear for 60 seriously tranquil minutes.

JULES TORTI, RMT, has been in practice since 1999 and a freelance writer since age six. In between massage engagements, she travels to Africa to be with chimpanzees and writes about her zany travels for Matador Network.
Start a stress-free book club. If accumulating CEUs is stressing you out – here’s a winning combo. Start a self-care-focussed book club with a few of your favourite massage therapists. Choose books like Brene Brown’s Daring Greatly. It’s all about vulnerability and imperfection. “Every day we experience the uncertainty, risks and emotional exposure that define what it means to be vulnerable, or to dare greatly.” Brene Brown is the best cheerleader and thought leader to have in your self-care tool-kit. It’s the perfect club starter book – followed by Eat, Pray, Love Made Me Do It: Life Journeys Inspired by the Bestselling Memoir (Riverhead). Elizabeth Gilbert’s cult book and Hollywood movie inspired a ripple audience: more than 50 women who were so influenced by her book that they made radical changes to their own lives. Maybe it will change yours too!

Spin out. Try something new and fabulous like Soul Cycle in Toronto (the first in Canada). The boutique spin studio is synonymous with an amazing playlist, a dimly-lit room and instructors who speak only in soulful, inspirational messages. Instructors go through a 10-week soul-intensive training in New York, so you’re in good hands. The last 10 minutes of class pops a wheelie when it kicks on the party lights and dance music in a gym-meet-dance-club mash-up. It’s $30 for a bike and shoe rental and the price tag includes full towel service, Saje facial products, hair ties, gum and water. Deal!

Stretch and surf. Grab a gang and book a soul-selfish week in Nicaragua. In Maderas Village you can check in to a Yoga and Surf Camp. The math is simple and attractive: jungle + beach = cool cabanas = good eats. “What began as a quest to create a place for friends and family to congregate has evolved into an idyllic boutique resort just off the beaten path in the Pacific coastal hills of Nicaragua. Maderas Village has created a “home for the modern traveler, for thinkers and doers and all of their interesting associates. In fully recognizing that it’s always the individuals that make an experience, we take great pride in our ability to attract and cultivate a community of characters, of movers and shakers, creative professionals, students, travelers, business savants, entrepreneurs, and everyone else in between.”

GREEN SPARKLE SMOOTHIE

Makes 1 or 2 smoothies

- 1/2 banana
- 1 apple, cut in half and cored
- 1 cup (250ml) loosely packed torn fresh kale
- 3/4 cup (175ml) fresh or frozen pineapple chunks
- 1/4 cup shelled hemp seeds
- 1 tbsp (15ml) grated fresh ginger
- 1 1/2 cups (375ml) coconut water
- Filtered water, just enough for desired consistency

Place all ingredients except water in a blender. Blend for 30-60 seconds, until smooth, adding water as needed.

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Detecting signs of skin cancer in massage therapy practice

BY PETER EMARY

Skin cancer is a major public health concern in Canada. According to recent estimates, the economic burden of skin cancer in Canada exceeds $530 million per year, and this cost is expected to rise.

The incidence and death rates of malignant melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer, have increased significantly among Canadians over the past 25 years. With early detection and treatment, however, the prognosis of skin cancer is favourable.

Manual therapists, including massage therapists, are ideally placed to screen for skin cancers among patients in clinical practice. Arguably like chiropractors, massage therapists see greater amounts of exposed patient skin more frequently than most other health-care professionals. This article illustrates the importance of examining patients for skin lesions on a regular basis in clinical practice.

A few members of the Waterloo Regional Chiropractic Society and I recently attended a dermatology seminar in Mississauga, Ont. Because I look at skin on peoples’ backs everyday at the office, I chose to take this seminar to brush up on my dermatology skills.

Since taking the seminar, I have referred a few patients with suspicious skin lesions to their general physicians. One of these patients, who has given me permission to share her clinical details, ended up having malignant melanoma.

One of the take home teaching points from the aforementioned dermatology seminar was to be on the lookout for the “ugly duckling” sign. If a mole or lesion looks completely different from any other lesion on a patient’s skin, this lesion (or “ugly duckling”) should raise some suspicion.

In this particular case, the patient had a mole on her back that was raised, multi-coloured (with hypo- and hyper-pigmented skin, including pink, black and dark brown areas), was about the size of a quarter, and just didn’t look right. I convinced the patient that she needed to see her physician, and she did.

After the mole was biopsied, they confirmed that it was malignant melanoma. The doctors told her that if she had waited six more months it would have been too late. She had follow-up surgery to remove all of the mole and surrounding skin, and her axillary lymph nodes were also surgically removed, bilaterally. She underwent further tests, including histologic examination of her lymph node tissues, and to her relief the oncologists
determined that her cancer had not metastasized.

Meanwhile, she has since been telling everyone that her chiropractor “saved her life.”

There are a few interesting points to this case. First, this patient was only in her late 50s, but lived alone and never knew she had a lesion on her back. The lesion was located inferior to her right scapula. She was also a former patient and I hadn’t seen her at the office for a few years.

Nevertheless, I still make a habit of gowning all of my patients on every visit, even if I’ve already examined them as a new patient previously. In this case, I was reminded of the value of gowning – not just on the first visit, but on all follow-up visits as well. Had I not continued to gown this patient, I wouldn’t have seen the spot on her back.

Moreover, her presenting chief complaint – which are neck pain and headaches – was not in the thoracic region but in her neck. I know that in a busy clinical practice gowning takes time, but for the time it took in this particular case, it was definitely worth it.

By the nature of your work, massage therapists see even more of the patients’ backs everyday in practice. As healthcare practitioners, we are well-positioned to screen for skin cancers, especially on the skin of the back where patients and/or other health care providers may not see them.

Perhaps, when evaluating options for continuing education, consider a refresher course on dermatology. You never know when this kind of knowledge will come in handy in clinical practice.

As healthcare practitioners, we just have to make sure that we’re looking.

Key dermatological features of malignant melanoma

- Asymmetrical lesion (one half is different than the other half)
- Irregular or poorly defined border
- Varied colour throughout (different shades of tan, brown, and black; and sometimes red, white, or blue within the same lesion)
- Larger than 6 mm in diameter
- Mole is evolving (i.e. changing in size, shape or colour) and looks different from other surrounding moles (“ugly duckling” sign)

Deep Tissue Massage describes how to use 83 compressive and stretching techniques in ways that are safe and effective for you and your clients.

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n 2006, Cheryl Mazak, RMT, was at a low point. Ten years into her profession, she was worn out from the hectic pace and frustrated by the relatively meager pay she was making at a clinic in Ottawa. Her right wrist was in constant pain. And she no longer felt fulfilled by her career.

So she quit. As far as Mazak knew, that would spell the end of her life as a massage therapist. It wasn’t. But it was a turning point. Now, following that time off, Mazak thrives as a massage therapist and an inventor. Here’s her story, which you might call a double-jointed success: one person making a name for herself in two different ways.

A real pain in the wrist
Wrist pain was common for many of Mazak’s clients, and a problem that’s becoming more prevalent, especially since so many people now use computers in their jobs. Although she was falling out of love with her career as a RMT, Mazak was developing a strong interest in finding a wrist-pain solution. She studied the problem and came to the conclusion that sufferers would benefit from a device designed to reduce strain by supporting the hand and wrist.

Eventually, her own wrist pain – and frustration with work – led her to stop practising as a therapist. During her time away from massage therapy, she entertained her creative side, honing her skills as a photographer. Her wrist pain subsided. And she continued to work on her pain-reduction invention.

“I had the shape and I knew what I wanted it to look like, with the curved bottom and the bed for the hand to rest in,” Mazak says. “But I didn’t know how I was going to get it to stay in place. When I came up with the idea to use medical-grade adhesive, I was in the patent office the next day. I knew I had it.”

That patent describes what she markets as Squinchi, a device designed to help reduce the pain and fatigue in the wrist associated with using a computer mouse or keyboard. It sticks to the wrist using a medical-grade, reusable adhesive gel pad. It’s designed to provide support without restricting range of motion, so users can type and mouse around unhindered. It’s good for people who have carpal tunnel syndrome – and it’s good for people who want to avoid getting it.

Trial by fire-breathing dragon
Mazak knew she was onto something with Squinchi when she started selling it – and sell it did. Before long, hundreds of people had placed orders through squinchi.com and other channels she’d established.

A big test for the product and its inventor came from a tough TV show. Mazak appeared on CBC’s Dragon’s Den, hoping to land an investment of $35,000 from one of the four “dragons” on the program – successful business tycoons looking for new ventures to invest in. The show’s popularity stems in part from the ruthless way the dragons assess contenders and their inventions.

Mazak’s experience (the episode aired in November 2016) was typically tumultuous. Initially, the dragons seemed impressed with Squinchi. Then they fired difficult questions...
about market projections and her business acumen. It looked as though she wouldn’t get a deal. But in the end, Jim Treliving, owner of restaurant chain Boston Pizza International, said he would invest. “I think you have something we can take to another level,” he said.

“It is not easy to stand in front of those dragons!” Mazak says. “I had a pretty good experience and I still went home and cried myself to sleep.”

Good things followed. A representative of the office supplies seller Staples contacted her after the program to discuss distribution. The retailer plans to start offering Squinchii this spring, Mazak says. She also ramped up a partnership with a separate distribution firm, which is developing other ways to broaden Squinchii’s market.

RMTs have been known to contact her, too. Mazak keeps a list of the people and organizations interested in providing Squinchii for their clients, and she passes that information to the distributor for future contact.

Bring on the critics
Mazak is confident that Squinchii is beneficial. But not everyone agrees. One physiotherapist wrote to her, worried that the design would put pressure just where it would hurt rather than help. Mazak bristles at that. “I’ve put 15 years into this,” she recalls remarking. “Do you really think I haven’t thought about where the pressure goes? Every single radius and curve is intentional… Every curve took thought and trials. So much went into making this product to fix a problem.”

Even though Treliving from Dragon’s Den initially agreed to participate in Squinchii’s market development, the partnership never materialized. After months considering how to structure the deal, they decided it would be best just not to. In any case, Mazak was able to raise the funds she needed through savings and investments from friends and family.

“I don’t see the body in parts anymore. I see it as a piriformis and a tensor fascia lata or a sternocleidomastoid. I see everything under the skin and I target one muscle at a time.”
Squinchi isn’t making her any money yet. But it will soon. Once the next manufacturing batch is done and paid for, Mazak will be able to start drawing profits from the enterprise, likely around June of this year.

In the meantime, she’s proud that the company is debt-free. “To not have debt is rare at this stage,” she says.

“Squinchi was something that I specifically designed to help mouse users reduce pain and fatigue in their wrist and hand.”

Return to RMT
Mazak still needs to work to keep herself as debt-free as her company. In 2014, she recertified as a RMT.

“I missed it,” she says. And she wanted to put into practice a few new ideas, such as a technique that would allow her to work without reinjuring her wrist.

She also relished the chance to review all her original training material. “It was a really amazing thing to re-learn everything after having spent years actively practising,” Mazak says. “You’ve already tried so many things and you’ve seen what works and what doesn’t. It just takes you to another level. You’re applying knowledge to your experience. So I don’t see the body in parts anymore. I see it as a piriformis and a tensor fascia lata or a sternocleidomastoid. I see everything under the skin and I target one muscle at a time.”

Now she works at Neuphysio Rehabilitation, a physiotherapy clinic in London, Ont. Most of her patients have been hurt in motor vehicle accidents, and have brain injuries, nervous system problems and other challenging conditions. Mazak finds the work fulfilling. After three years back in practice, she hasn’t reinjured her own wrist.

Ironically, using Squinchi wasn’t the answer for her. A new technique to apply pressure has made all the difference. And no, her own wrist pain wasn’t the catalyst for her foray into entrepreneurship.

“My wrist pain happened after I had come up with the idea for Squinchi,” she says. “Squinchi was something that I specifically designed to help mouse users reduce pain and fatigue in their wrist and hand.”

So now – between her new technique and Squinchi – Mazak can say she found a solution for herself as well as for people suffering after too many mouse clicks. A double-jointed success indeed.
Myofascial Release provides comprehensive training for hands-on therapists of all disciplines and at all levels to expand their practice. From technique descriptions and their applications to client interactions and the preservation of practitioner strength and functionality, this guide teaches therapists every crucial aspect of employing myofascial release to its fullest benefit.

This scientifically grounded whole-body approach presents an overview of the entire fascial matrix, the three-dimensional web of tissue that supports, encompasses, and protects every other structure in the body. The explanation of the anatomy and function of the connective tissue system gives practitioners the solid background needed for working most effectively with soft tissue to treat muscle injury, immobility, and pain.

Readers will come away from Myofascial Release with a holistic understanding of the approach and how to apply the principles to their practice.
Running a successful health-care practice requires both medical and business expertise. It is critical to stay on top of day-to-day finances to manage the ups and downs of a competitive market. What happens when the time comes to take the practice to the next level, or an emergency strikes?

Moving to a new location, renovating, upgrading equipment, launching a marketing campaign, or hiring new staff to expand services – these are all potential costs of running a practice. Without quick and easy access to financing when needed, dreams for a successful practice can be crushed. Luckily, there are several ways to go about getting the funds needed to grow one’s practice – some of which aren’t necessarily common knowledge.

Business loans
There are more than a dozen specific types of business loans, and those offered by traditional lenders typically fall under three distinct categories: lines of credit, short-term loans and long-term loans.

Lines of credit – A line of credit is like a credit card, meaning that it is essentially a pool of money. People can borrow the funds they need when they need them and make payments only on what was used. Although this is a great way for businesses to access the capital they need on demand, lines of credit often have high compounded interest rates. When considering a credit card or a traditional line of credit, it is important to consider one’s situation. These options are best when the borrower needs to make up for temporary shortfalls in income rather than huge purchases like expansions or improvements. Banks and other major lenders offer lines of credit to business owners.

Short-term loans – A short-term loan is a sum of money borrowed from a bank or another type of lender. However, rather than making fixed monthly payments, the borrower simply repays the entire amount, in full, on a specific date. As the name suggests, most business owners use these to settle their short-term needs; they are perfect for things like building inventory, raising funds for accounts payable, or for finishing up some sort of project that will provide a quick return. Most short-term loans are valued at less than $100,000. Banks, credit unions, and other licensed lenders provide them, and they are especially helpful for those who run seasonal businesses.

Long-term loans – Long-term loans are the most popular types of business loans out there – and for good reason. Commercial lenders tend to offer long-term loans for things like working capital, refinancing, acquisitions, and even business expansion. A good credit and a
well-established business are required to get a long-term loan with a reasonable interest rate. Falling short of these requirements, the loan application must be accompanied by a solid business plan. If the borrower can prove that the loan will help the business grow, there is a good chance the borrower will be able to get the funds needed, even with a low credit score.

**Alternative financing options**

Alternative financing refers to financial channels and instruments that have emerged outside the traditional finance system, or are offered in collaboration with banks. There are several sources, each with its own unique set of benefits and drawbacks. We outline a few of the alternative financing options that you should also be evaluated when looking for funding to help you grow your business.

**Alternative loans** – Alternative loans are an option for people who have average to bad credit, as alternative lenders look at much more than the credit score. They also consider the overall success of the potential borrower’s business, business plan, and wellbeing. Someone who has been in business for a while and generates enough revenue, could qualify for term loans based solely on the length of business and the monthly sales. The interest rates associated with these types of loans are higher than a loan one might obtain from a traditional lender, but they are quite competitive when placed against the common business credit cards that even those with good credit can obtain.

Merchant cash advances – These are an option for business owners whose customers pay with credit or debit cards. Funding can be obtained in as little as one to five business days, and credit score is often not even a consideration. Lenders look at things like the amount of time the business has been operational as well as its monthly revenue to determine funding eligibility. While some merchant cash advances come with high annual percentage rates (APRs), others have one-time fees built right into the total amount of the loan. Instead of monthly payments over a fixed term, repayment for this type of loan involves a percentage of the daily sales.

**Working capital loans** – This type of loans can help finance everyday business needs. Working capital loans are designed for more immediate issues like accounts payable, squaring up wages, or even pulling a seasonal business through a lull in activity. Oftentimes, lenders evaluate the borrower’s time in business, the average annual and/or monthly sales, and even the immediate business forecast to determine the borrower’s ability to repay the funds. An application must be filled out and a contract needs to be signed if the loan is approved.

When evaluating the many options for business loans, be sure the lender provides fast turnaround of approvals, has a credible history, understands the unique needs of the business, and can deliver the capital when its needed the most. Remember, while traditional lenders all offer lines of credit and short- and long-term loans, a good credit score and/or many years in business are required to obtain a loan with them.

Also, make sure the lender delivers a product that is tailored to your business needs. For example, flexible payment solutions that align with the cash flow of the business and help plan financing based on the terms. Finally, remember the financing is for the business. Make sure the lender has not restricted the use of the financing, so that money can be used as needed to support the business.

“For more stories and tips on practice management, visit www.massagetherapycanada.com.”

massagetherapycanada.com
As a massage therapist, last-minute cancellations and no-shows are a major hurdle to overcome. Just a few empty time slots here and there can cost you a lot of money in the long run. For a practice that charges $90 per hour for a massage therapy session, just five empty, hour-long slots a week can mean a loss of more than $20,000 in revenue over the course of a year.

Luckily, just a few easy changes to your daily routine will help you avoid missed opportunities and make more money as a massage therapist.

1 Implement clear cancellation policy

Implement and communicate your cancellation policy. For example, you may decide to charge anywhere from 50 per cent to 100 per cent of your massage therapy fees for any no-show or cancellation with less than 24-hour notice. You can communicate your cancellation policy using a poster at your place of business, on your website or even in your appointment confirmation emails.

Clear and repeated communication of this policy does wonders to bring awareness to the cause and provides clients with a sense of responsibility. For added protection, you may also request a deposit or credit card number at the time of booking. If you go this route, however, be sure to use a payment processing tool that can securely collect credit card information.


Being proactive and reminding clients of their appointments are proven to reduce no-shows. Try scheduling a 15-minute break in the morning and another in the afternoon dedicated to confirming your appointments for the day after next. Make this a priority. If you don’t schedule time in your day for this task, you may never get it done.

If calling patients individually isn’t your thing, try email or text messaging. Some massage therapists even use social media. Choose whichever way allows you to get a confirmation from your customer that they will be attending their next appointment. If you are looking for a timesaving option, try an application that automates or allows you to pre-program reminder emails and text messages.

3 Maintain a waiting list to fill cancellations

While it is not always possible to avoid cancellations, confirming appointments will allow you to find out sooner, giving you a chance to fill that gap in your schedule. That’s why it’s important to maintain a proper waiting list. Documenting which clients are waiting for an appointment, as well as their date and time preferences, is key to quickly filling those empty time slots. Be sure to collect contact information that will allow you to easily reach those clients at a moment’s notice.

4 Offer a promotion to fill empty time slots

If you’ve called everyone on your waiting list without luck, try offering a promo. While discounting your services may not sound appealing, making 75 per cent of your regular hourly rate is definitely better than nothing, especially if you’re already at work. You can maintain a list of clients with flexible schedules that would be interested in last-minute appointments, or just try posting the time slot with a promotional rate on Facebook or any other social media account where you have a presence.

Getting organized and introducing these small suggestions into your routine can significantly reduce no-shows and limit the income loss associated with last-minute cancellations.

EXPERT ADVICE

PRACTICE MANAGEMENT

4 tips to avoid costly no-shows

Implementing efficiencies to help maximize income BY DOMINIC IAFIGLIOLA

DOMINIC IAFIGLIOLA is the founder of CalendarSpots.com, an online scheduling software for sole practitioners and businesses of all sizes. Dominic works closely with massage therapy professionals and other health and wellness practitioners to help them collaboratively manage staff schedules, client appointments and room availability.
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massagetherapycanada.com
Phishing expedition
Avoid getting hooked by online scammers  

BY JESSICA FOSTER

Phishing attacks are typically executed in an email or text message. They can be sent randomly or specifically targeting you. Social engineering is oftentimes employed – gaining your confidence and tricking you into the fraud. In specific attacks against you the phisher may know more about you to act now by leading you to believe something bad will happen unless you act immediately. Don’t fall for this tactic.

Phishing scams will continue to become increasingly sophisticated. A good rule of thumb is, if in doubt, throw it out (hit delete).

“Phishing uses counterfeit email to trick you into giving up confidential information.”

Phishing uses counterfeit email to trick you into giving up confidential information.

Recognizing Phishing email
Phishing is a method cybercriminals use to obtain confidential information that can be used to harm you. Just as a person might use bait to entice a fish to bite the hook, phishing uses counterfeit email to trick you into giving up confidential information.

Phishing scams are often intended to steal passwords, obtain banking and credit card information, enable identity theft, encrypt your data and control your computer without you knowing it. This is often done by tricking you (knowingly or otherwise) to install malicious software (malware) onto your computer. Once installed, this malware can steal your personal information or lock you out of your computer, holding your data for ransom. These are just a few of the consequences of a phishing attack.

How to avoid being scammed
Educate yourself on how to recognize phishing email characteristics. Then, ensure all your staff is trained to recognize phishing attempts and know what to do when they suspect phishing. Here are a few best practices to follow:

• Use caution when opening emails from unknown or untrusted sources
• Do not click on links provided by unknown or untrusted sources
• Perform regular data backups to external mediums (i.e. separate computer drive). After backing up your data disconnect the external drive from your PC.
• Do not allow untrained or untrusted persons to use your PC
• Lock your laptop and desktop PC and smart cellphones
• Purchase anti-virus software and get the updates

As Benjamin Franklin once stated, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. You can do yourself a favour by dedicating time to research and further study on the matter of phishing.
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