

The Web Propels Education's Evolution

by Brandi Schlossberg

From baby shoes and banking to diets and dating, the Internet has a prominent place in nearly every aspect of modern life. Even massage therapy, with human contact at its core, is being swept up in the wave of the World Wide Web.

As technology advances and more people gain access to the Internet, the Web's impact on massage is constantly expanding, especially in the realm of education.

"We have noticed an increase in the number of providers of online education, and this is not just in massage therapy, but in other professions as well," said M.K. Brennan, president of the American Massage Therapy Association (AMTA).

In 2002, AMTA began offering online continuing education for massage therapists. The association requires members to earn 48 hours of continuing education every four years.

"We do recognize that online education is a growing trend," Brennan said, "and it has value for continuing education that isn't hands-on."

The National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork (NCBTMB), a nonprofit organization that has certified more than 88,000 massage therapists and bodyworkers, has also approved a large number of online classes for continuing education.

NCBTMB recognizes massage programs with up to 300 hours of "home

study"—along with in-class time. Deemed "blended learning," the combination of online and on-site education may be the happy medium for massage educators.

"ABMP [Associated Bodywork and Massage Professionals] is open to online education delivered in interactive, engaging and informative formats, especially with respect to continuing education," said Les Sweeney, president of ABMP. "At the same time, we view the live classroom setting as vital for building certain skills essential to the practice of massage."

Certain topics, such as pathology, medical terminology, anatomy and ethics, seem particularly well-suited to online learning, while others teaching proper strokes and body mechanics, may be better left to live instruction.

Fortunately, advances in technology have made online education far more palatable to people-oriented massage therapists. No longer does distance education mean watching a video, reading a book and taking a test from home.

Popular open-source programs, such as Moodle, allow students and teachers to bring each course to life, developing it with their own input and feedback. Professors and peers can interact all the time, so communities often spring up around these Internet classes.

These days, "home study" means streaming video, lectures you can pause and rewind, discussion forums, easily accessible text, online exams and much more.

Even face-to-face massage programs are benefiting from what the Web has to offer. Tech-savvy teachers complement their live class sessions with an Internet presence, posting materials, such as

syllabi, PowerPoint presentations, digital lecture recordings and relevant links for students to access at any time.

The convenient delivery of such an array of information is one of the many benefits for students enrolled in online education. Another perk is flexibility—students can review the material at their own pace and do so repeatedly.

However, these two benefits are just the start when it comes to distance education's growing popularity among students, therapists and educators. Online learning

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allows students to keep their day job and still attend classes. Online courses also reduces travel time and expenses. For prospective and practicing massage therapists living in rural areas or who cannot commit to attending courses on the same day each week, online learning may be a good option.

If you are considering online classes, whether for continuing education or general training, first find out your state's stance on distance education for massage therapists. A few states do not accept online continuing education.

It's best to go with NCBTMB-approved courses, along with ones that offer blended learning. As you investigate Web-based offerings, try to get a sense of the community around a class, as well as the level of interaction you'll have with teachers and peers.

Your level of comfort is also important. The best Internet courses make it easy to navigate the class, download tools and resources, track your progress, give and receive feedback, and stop and start lessons.

Instead of being overwhelmed by the rising tide of Internet technology, take advantage of the new opportunities available and join the growing ranks of massage professionals who are riding the wave of the World Wide Web to success.

For more information on professional development, advanced training, online courses and spa management programs, contact Cortiva Institute's Director of Continuing Education Patrick Pheasant at (201) 215-6329 or visit www.cortiva.com/ce.

Refine Yourself Online with Cortiva

With hundreds of years of combined experience, Cortiva Institute's award-winning faculty allows you to learn from experts in massage therapy education. This tradition of quality education continues today with Cortiva's new selection of online courses.

Cortiva is partnered with industry leaders to provide online continuing education for massage therapists of all levels, from those studying for certification to those too busy running their practice to attend campus-based classes. These courses will refine your skills and expand your knowledge—and because they're online, they're available anytime, anywhere.*

Exam prep

For massage school graduates preparing for state or national licensing exams, Cortiva offers an extensive online exam preparation course. The class features hundreds of practice questions to help you study and gain the confidence to pass licensing exams.

Business development

Practicing therapists will benefit from Cortiva's online business courses, covering professional arenas, such as marketing, ethics and client retention, so they can grow their practices and stay current with state requirements.

Spa therapy

Cortiva's online spa courses enable spa therapists to increase their range of modalities and offer new services. From scalp and foot treatments to salt exfoliation and herbal wraps, these classes expand your bodywork menu and make your practice stand out from the competition. Moreover, spa owners and managers can combine Cortiva's online classes with specialized on-site professional development and advanced training courses. Customized spa management programs are also available.

Convenient and economical

Online courses range in price from \$25 to \$79 and provide between one and three continuing education credits. Cortiva continues to provide the highest quality continuing education, and with a wide range of new online classes, it can now deliver these programs directly to your home, spa or office.

*Not all states accept online continuing education. Please check with your state's governing body. Minimum system requirements apply.

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