



INSTRUCTOR RESOURCE

Massage Therapist's Guide to Pathology, 7th edition

Secrets of Teaching Pathology

Pathology can be a challenging topic for students of massage therapy. Students may find it overwhelming, unpleasant, or a little scary. Or, they may believe it will never apply to the kind of bodywork they plan to do.

Pathology teachers have the exciting job of helping students to overcome whatever resistance they may feel, so that they may explore pathology fully and with confidence, and so they may learn to apply their knowledge for the safety and well-being of their clients.

Three Guiding Principles

In my many years of working in this field, I have identified three major issues at the core of teaching pathology well. While these may seem self-evident, I encourage educators to revisit these ideas to see how weaving these attitudes into the fabric of a pathology course may address many learners' feelings of resistance. The key issues are these:

Illness and healing. The body's capacity for healing is as important as the process of illness. When we keep this in focus, the study of pathology expands to include how the body repairs or compensates. This provides a context for massage therapy as an intervention that may help to create an environment conducive to positive change.

Respect and compassion. People who live with conditions deserve to be discussed with appreciation—even the fictional "Mrs. Smith" or "Client X" we make up to act as examples. Unconditional positive regard for our clients is something we must demonstrate in every aspect of our teaching.

Life is an open-book test. No pathology course can be comprehensive. While it is important to know a lot of this material, it is even more important to know *when and where to get more information*, either from this text or from other resources. For teachers, this removes the burden of having to cover every detail of every condition in every lecture. For learners, this means they must become discerning consumers of information to bring best practices to the table.

“Why Do We Need to Know This?”

It is the perennial question. In the context of pathology, the answer varies.

Some schools focus on a vision of massage therapy as an integrated health care profession that can be conducted as a solo practice or within a clinical setting. For this group, understanding pathology is a foundational piece on which specialties can then be built.

Other schools draw learners who intend to work in non-clinical settings—franchises, spas, resorts, cruise ships, or their spare room while the kids are at school. For these people an in depth understanding of pathology may seem less crucial, but it is not. People with health challenges go to spas too. A long-term client may develop a serious condition and want their beloved massage therapist to help them through it. A non-clinical setting does not preclude having medically complex clients.

So we teach pathology to propel our students toward becoming safe, effective, and evidence-informed practitioners, no matter where they practice.

Building a Course with A Massage Therapist’s Guide to Pathology 7th Edition

We have provided everything you need to build a successful pathology program with *A Massage Therapist’s Guide to Pathology, 7th edition* (MTGP) as the central text. In addition to pathology concepts and specific topics, the text provides exercises in critical thinking and practical application, robust end-of-chapter questions, and thoughtful discussion prompts to help students integrate and apply information.

The content in MTGP exceeds the recommendations of the Entry Level Analysis Project (ELAP), the Commission for Massage Therapy Accreditation (COMTA), and the recommendations of the Federation of Massage Therapy Licensing Board (administrators of the Massage Board Licensing Exam, or MBLEx).