AMT Position Statement

Use of Electro and Photobiomodulation Therapy in Massage Therapy Practice

Electrotherapy refers to therapeutic devices that deliver controlled electrical currents or pulsed electromagnetic fields to tissues for therapeutic purposes. Common modalities include Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation (TENS), Neuromuscular and Electrical Muscle Stimulation (NMS/EMS).

Photobiomodulation therapy refers to therapeutic devices that deliver low-intensity light energy to tissues to stimulate cellular processes. Common modalities include Low-Level Laser Therapy (LLLT) and Light-Emitting Diode (LED) therapy.

AMT recognises that these therapies may be used as an adjunctive modality by massage therapists.

AMT only permits the use of cold laser devices, specifically those operating at safe, low-intensity wavelengths that do not produce thermal effects or tissue damage, i.e. Class 3B lasers or lower with an output power of 5 - 500mW.

High-power laser therapy is not within the scope of massage therapy practice. These devices require different training and have greater safety risks. Class 4 lasers produce significant heating effects.

Training and competency requirements

Massage therapists bear full professional responsibility for ensuring their own competency before using any therapeutic device, regardless of its availability to consumers. The accessibility of a device to the public does not diminish the professional standards required for its therapeutic application.

Massage therapists using electrotherapy or photobiomodulation devices must complete formal training specific to each modality type from a recognised training provider. This training must include:

- physiological principles and mechanisms of action
- appropriate clinical applications and indications
- comprehensive contraindications and precautions
- safe operation, including parameter settings and dosimetry
- equipment maintenance and safety protocols
- emergency procedures and adverse event management
- documentation and informed consent requirements.

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For devices that are available direct-to-consumer and where formal training may not be readily available, massage therapists must demonstrate competency through the following self-directed activities:

- Complete comprehensive study of manufacturer's training materials, user manuals, and safety documentation
- Review current peer-reviewed literature on the device's mechanism of action, clinical applications, and contraindications
- Understand relevant physiological principles underlying the modality
- Document all learning activities undertaken.

Regardless of the mode of training undertaken, massage therapists must:

- **demonstrate competency** in device operation, parameter selection, and safety protocols
- **maintain current knowledge** through continuing professional education
- **understand contraindications and precautions**
- **retain evidence** of training/competency.

Contraindications and precautions

Therapists must understand and screen for contraindications including but not limited to:

- cardiac pacemakers and implanted electronic devices
- malignancy or suspected malignancy in treatment area
- active infection or inflammation
- impaired sensation or communication ability
- thrombosis or thrombophlebitis
- open wounds
- pregnancy
- metal implants in treatment area.

Device safety and regulation

Massage therapists must ensure that all devices have undergone safety, quality and effectiveness testing through the Australian Therapeutic Goods Administration. All devices must be operated and maintained according to manufacturer guidelines, with equipment service and calibration logs kept current. Damaged or malfunctioning equipment must never be used, and appropriate electrical safety testing must be conducted regularly to ensure ongoing device safety.

Insurance

Practitioners must maintain professional indemnity insurance that explicitly covers the use of electrotherapeutic and/or photobiomodulation devices.

Professional accountability and scope

Massage therapists using these devices must work within their professional scope of practice and refer to medical or allied health practitioners as appropriate. These therapies must not be used to treat conditions that normally fall outside the scope of practice of a massage therapist.

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Client screening and informed consent

Before using any electrotherapy or photobiomodulation device, massage therapists must:

- conduct thorough client health screening
- identify all contraindications and precautions
- obtain informed consent that clearly explains:
  - what the device does and how it works
  - expected sensations and outcomes
  - potential risks and side effects
  - alternatives available
  - client's right to decline or discontinue treatment.

Documentation

Massage therapists must maintain comprehensive treatment records including:

- pre-treatment screening and contraindication check
- informed consent
- device parameters used (intensity, frequency, duration, etc.)
- treatment area and electrode/probe placement
- client response and any adverse reactions
- post-treatment outcomes.

Advertising and claims

Massage therapists must comply with Australian Consumer Law. All advertising and promotional materials must:

- be accurate, evidence-based, and not misleading
- avoid unsubstantiated claims about device effectiveness
- accurately represent the practitioner's qualifications and training
- not exaggerate therapeutic benefits or create unrealistic expectations.