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# AMT Case Study Guidelines



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## INTRODUCTION

A case study is the methodical investigation of a person, or persons, pathology, or treatment method. It follows specified parameters in order to allow possible replication or further investigation.

Case studies are an invaluable record of the clinical practices of a profession. Case studies also provide valuable teaching material, demonstrating both classical and unusual presentations which may confront the practitioner.

## General Instructions:

Your finished case study should be only 500 to 1,500 words in length, therefore, you will need to write efficiently and avoid unnecessarily flowery language. An important general rule for writing case studies is to stick to the facts. A case study should be a fairly modest description of what actually happened. Speculation about underlying mechanisms of the disease process or treatment should be restrained. Remember that a case study is primarily a chronicle of a patient's progress, not a story about massage therapy. Refrain from using editorial or promotional remarks.

Case reports are either prospective or retrospective. Prospective reports are begun before the treatment series, and thus allow the practitioner to tailor the treatment design to research questions. Retrospective reports describe a treatment series that occurred in the past (ie prior to the start of the case report), and can still be a valuable submission.

## STEP 1:

### Observe

The first step in creating a case study is to find something or someone to study. Most often case studies investigate a unique subject, pathology or treatment to add to the current body of research or to further research that has already been done by altering the methods in some way. Please refer to the Association of Massage Therapists (AMT) Case Study Database (freely available at <http://www.amt.org.au/downloads/practice-resources/AMT-Case-Study-Database-December-2013.pdf>) for a number of unique studies examples.

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**STEP 2:  
Define the Research Question**

The second step is to define the question. What is being studied—and why? If the research question is not well defined, the case study will be difficult to complete. Before beginning to write the study itself, you should gather all of the materials relevant to the case and form a clear picture of the story that you wish to share with your profession.

**STEP 3:  
Investigate**

The next step is to investigate what has already been documented in the area of enquiry. This means searching for information, not only on the research question but also on the fundamental principals inherent in the question, such as pathology or treatment types currently in favour.

A thorough investigation of available information will also help to refine the research question. As noted, case studies are unique investigations of a person, pathology or treatment. Identical case studies might not add to the existing body of knowledge. If a case study has already been conducted for a particular research question and will not add to the body of knowledge, you might need to consider a different approach by redefining the research question accordingly.

There are a number of open access resources where you can locate research. PubMed (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed>) and the Cochrane Library (<http://www.thecochranelibrary.com/view/0/index.html>) can be sourced free of charge via the Internet. Resource rooms and journal databases are free to use in most public libraries and have the added benefit of a librarian to assist in your searches. AMT provides an open-access massage therapy research database for members and the public (<http://www.amt.org.au/downloads/practice-resources/AMT-Classified-Research-January-2016.pdf>), as well as the previously mentioned members-only case study database.

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**STEP 4:  
Obtain Informed Consent**

BEFORE a case study commences, a therapist MUST obtain signed informed consent from the subject/client. As stated in the AMT's Code of Practice, "Informed consent is the voluntary agreement by the client to a treatment plan after proper, accurate and adequate information is conveyed about the proposed technique and protocols that will be used" (p 30). This policy holds true for both everyday practice and case studies. AMT members can access a case study informed consent form at <http://www.amt.org.au/downloads/practice-resources/AMT-Case-Study-Consent-Form.pdf>

**STEP 5:  
Collect and Document Data**

Prior to commencing a case study, you will need to determine what evidence to collect in support of the research question and how to document the data collected.

For example, if studying the effects of Swedish massage on blood pressure (BP) in a post-operative cardiac patient, the therapist will need to collect the subject's base-line BP prior to the cardiac surgery, as well as the subject's BP post-op and post-op-post-massage.

Tools for the collection of data need to be used properly. All measurements need to be taken by the same person, using the same measurement tool, in the same manner, in order to maintain reliability and accuracy of the measurements. The type and number of measurements and tools that are used will depend on the case itself. The same applies for when the measures are taken.

**STEP 6:  
Perform the Intervention**

Now that you have undertaken the necessary preliminary measures, it's time to perform the case study, and collect the relevant data. If, during the case study, you find that changes need to be made in the design (for example in the type of data you collect or the methods you use to collect it), make sure to record them. These alterations should then be discussed in the 'discussion' section of the written submission.

**STEP 7:****Written submission**

Use the template below as a guide to writing up your case study.

**Case Study Template****Title Page**

The title page should include the following:

- Full title of the study  
This should incorporate the words 'case study'. For example, 'Local massage with topical analgesic, a novel treatment modality for temporomandibular muscular pain: A case study report of five consecutive cases (2008)'.
- Author's name and contact information.  
This usually includes the university or association the author is affiliated with and a contact email address. Do NOT put personal information on this page.

The title page can also include (optional)

- Medical subject headings (MESH)  
A guide to these terms is found at <https://www.nlm.nih.gov/pubs/factsheets/mesh.html>  
For example, MeSH terms for 'massage' are therapeutic touch, craniosacral massage, massage therapy, etc.

**Abstract**

The abstract is a brief summary of the article written in either narrative or structured form.

- Narrative form follows the development of the study as if it were a short story (pathology A caused symptom B allowing for treatment C).
- Structured form uses prescribed headings such as Introduction, Methods, Outcome, Discussion, etc. Structured abstracts will use the same structure sub-headings in the expanded paper.

**Introduction**

The introduction states the research question and outlines why it is relevant and unique, using references where applicable.

**Methods**

The methods section should include the following information about the case study design elements:

- who the subject is and why they were chosen
- what treatment was used and why
- what measurements were obtained and why
- how informed consent was obtained.

**Outcome**

This section illustrates the qualitative and quantitative results of a case study. Collected data can be illustrated with graphs and tables.

**Discussion**

The discussion section should include the following information:

- an analysis of the outcomes, including a hypothesis for why the outcomes occurred the way they did
- a comparison of the outcomes with available research
- limitations of the study
- implications for future research

**Acknowledgements**

Individuals and bodies whose intellectual contribution does not justify being included as an author are mentioned in this section.

Potential author bias and conflicts of interest should also be included here.

**References**

List all resources used in the compilation of the case study in the references subheading. In Good Hands uses The American Psychological Association (APA) referencing system. A quick reference APA guide can be found at <http://www.apastyle.org>

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**STEP 8:**  
**Submission**

Submit your case study to

**journal@amt.org.au**

Your case study will be reviewed to assess its validity and reliability.

You may be asked to correct and address any errors or design flaws, and then re-submit a revised version.

Client confidentiality must be strictly observed. Please do not include the client's name or identifying details on any papers submitted. If photographs are submitted, please obtain written consent from the client(s) to use the images and ensure that any identifying details have been removed or obscured.

# case study research informed consent



Case study title:

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Author:

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I consent to participate in the case study named above.

The author has outlined the purpose of the case study and thoroughly explained the techniques and protocols that will be used in treatment. The author is required to operate in strict accordance with the Association of Massage Therapists' Massage Therapy Code of Practice.

I understand and acknowledge that:

- my participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw at any time
- my anonymity is preserved and I will not be identified in publications or otherwise without my express written consent
- my health information will remain confidential at all times
- the author is bound by the professional and ethical standards of the Association of Massage Therapists (AMT).

By signing this document, I agree to participate in this case study.

Name of participant:

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Signature:

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Date:

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