

## **2009 Research Grant Summaries**

### ***Effect of Massage Therapy on Postural Control in Older Persons; JoEllen M. Sefton, Auburn University, Auburn, AL, \$29,972***

In persons older than 65 years of age, falls are the primary cause of accidental death, decreased mobility and independence, and increased morbidity. Research indicates that age-related changes in balance, mobility, and gait are possible contributing factors. Two responses have been observed after a therapeutic massage: 1) Patients may be unstable immediately after treatment, possibly due to changes in blood pressure, the relaxation response, and other physiological factors; 2) Patients may become more stable over time, possibly due to beneficial changes in neural response, anxiety, and the mind-body connection. Little research has been done to examine the influence of massage on balance and postural control. This study will assess 40 healthy volunteers in the 55-75 age group who will be randomized into a non-massage control and a massage treatment group. Functional and static balance measures, as well as heart rate and blood pressure, will be assessed before and after massage sessions. The post-treatment measures will be taken immediately, 20, and 60 minutes after each massage session, and after six weekly massage sessions. Follow-up assessments will be completed for three weeks after the treatments cease so it can be determined how long any changes are maintained. Understanding how this widely prescribed therapy affects balance and postural control is vital to the development of safe and effective treatment protocols. Moreover, if massage therapy proves to improve balance and postural control it could be utilized as a safe and non-pharmacological preventative treatment for falls in older populations.

### ***Feasibility Study of a Massage Therapy Research Network (MassageNet), Jerrilyn Cambron, LMT, DC, PhD, National University of Health Sciences, Lombard, IL, \$30,000***

The purpose of this project is to initiate an innovative multisite, multistate practice-based Massage Therapy Research Network (MassageNet) that will ultimately expand the body of knowledge in the massage profession and establish mechanisms to ensure that new knowledge is integrated into massage practice. The first phase of the project will include development of the infrastructure of the MassageNet. The second phase will include: (1) a therapist survey assessing personal demographics, massage education, technology utilization and attitudes, and research interests; (2) a client survey assessing personal demographics, reason for receiving massage care, previous experience with massage care, effects of care, and satisfaction with treatment. The MassageNet infrastructure will lead to numerous practice-based projects as well as enhanced communication between massage therapists and researchers.