ARE THEIR NEEDS BEING MET?
WHAT DO NEW ZEALAND BACHELOR DEGREE QUALIFIED MASSAGE THERAPISTS REQUIRE FROM A PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION?

GEORGIA HOLLEBON & JO SMITH

BACKGROUND

In New Zealand there is only one professional massage association (Massage New Zealand) and there are two education providers offering a BDQ (New Zealand College of Massage and Southern Institute of Technology). The BDQ has been available in New Zealand since 2002. 1 Current total members of MNZ is 340 and current total Remedial massage memberships of MNZ is 227.1

OBJECTIVES

The aim of this research project was to gain a greater understanding of what NZ BDQ massage therapists require from a professional association.

METHOD

Semi-structured telephone interviews (15 mins average).

Thematic analysis used to find major themes; results reported using pseudonyms.

Ethical approval was granted by the Southern Institute of Technology Human Research Ethics Committee.

PARTICIPANTS

Total Number: 10 (8 females, 2 males)

Studied or studying at:

- New Zealand College of Massage (Auckland): 1
- Southern Institute of Technology: 9

Two participants were still studying in their third year of a BDQ and the highest number of years with a degree qualification was 14 years.

9 participants were currently practicing massage.

3 were members of MNZ, 2 had previously been members as students but had not renewed their memberships.

RESULTS

CURRENT BDQ MEMBERS OF MASSAGE NEW ZEALAND

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<tr>
<th>MEMBERS</th>
<th>NON-MEMBERS</th>
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<td>70%</td>
<td>30%</td>
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All three current members were members because they wanted to be part of a professional association and be seen as professionals.

PARTICIPANTS DESIRING A SEPARATE ASSOCIATION FOR BDQ MASSAGE THERAPISTS

<table>
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<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
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<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
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The research also suggested that MNZ currently may not be meeting all BDQ therapists' needs and suggested changes such as providing Accident Compensation Corporation accreditation, raising public awareness, and providing a distinction in qualification recognition.

MJOR REASONS WHY PARTICIPANTS WERE NOT MEMBERS OF MNZ

QUOTE FROM PARTICIPANT

Cost Vs. Perceived Benefits (all seven non-members agreed)

“Cost is the least of my concerns. I don’t think the cost is even close to the value...” – Frank

Career Stage (three non-members)

“It is a cost that I do not require at the moment but [she] fully promotes what they are doing.” – Debbie (not currently in a massage therapy position)

Time Factor for CPD & First Aid (three non-members)

“My first aid certificate has lapsed, and so for me to renew my first aid certificate is a two day course and so that is an expense and then timing trying to organize my family around that.” – Karen

Lack of Public Recognition of MNZ

Lilie said that she does not “really see them advocating as much as [she] would like to get massage more credited in NZ.”

MAIN SUGGESTED OF CHANGE FOR MNZ

QUOTE FROM PARTICIPANT

Gaining Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) recognition (nine participants)

“This would boost awareness of how massage could be utilized and I think therapists would strive to up their qualifications to get the ACC recognition.” – Lilie

Increase Public Education and Awareness of Massage (six participants)

Karen wants MNZ to “raise their public profile. So when I think of, for example a builder, you know you need to find a registered Master Builder. So if it was in the public’s mind that they needed to look for a registered MTT, well that would clinch me.”

Provide Recognition of the BDQ and Distinction From Diploma Qualified Therapists (six participants)

“I do think we have a right to a different level, we have worked harder, studied longer, and I think it would be fair that there is a distinction.” – Lilie

Other suggested changes were more networking among massage therapists (n=3), more benefits (n=3), localized workshops and block courses (n=2), provide mentoring and supervision (n=3), reduced and education level targeted CPD hours (n=1), uphold the image of massage in NZ (n=1), and a monthly magazine (n=1).

DISCUSSION

Preliminary research suggests that MNZ currently may not be meeting the needs of all the BDQ massage therapists in NZ, as only 30% of the participants were current members of the association. This is further evidenced by the non-renewal of membership by two of the participants.

Previous to this study, three small pilot studies identified the cost of membership being a barrier to MNZ membership. The topic of a separate massage association has been proposed in a previous study by Firth. However, both the results from Firth and the current results may be influenced by location of training. Relatively high numbers of participants who supported this suggestion (77.7% and 90%) gained their qualification at the Southern Institute of Technology.

There are still the issues of ACC accreditation and the distinction for the BDQ massage therapists in NZ that need to be addressed for the participants in this study to have their needs met.

LIMITATIONS

- Findings are not generalizable due to the small sample size and little variation in demographics.
- Lack of interviewer experience.
- Information off MNZ website was limited as the researcher was not a member.

REFERENCES