Southern Institute of Technology
Journal of Applied Research
Special Edition
A massage degree and beyond: the journey of BTSM graduates
2004-2013
Authors:

Celebrating ten years of BTSM graduates
Celebrating ten years of BTSM graduates
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Editorial

Celebrating ten years of massage therapy bachelor’s degree graduates at Southern Institute of Technology

Welcome to this special edition of SITJAR where we celebrate ten years of massage therapy degree graduates from the Bachelor of Therapeutic and Sports Massage (BTSM) programme. In 2002, the first Bachelor’s degree for massage therapists in the Southern Hemisphere was launched at the Southern Institute of Technology. At the time the goals were to offer a course of study that would develop professional and competent soft tissue/massage therapists, who were reflective, research literate, independent learners and credible health professionals. A ten year anniversary offers an ideal opportunity to reflect on the achievements and significant events over that time. This special edition recognises and celebrates the graduates of the BTSM. Snapshots (graduate profiles) and stories feature alongside an analysis of the opportunities and outcomes that higher education has offered BTSM graduates.

As part of the Year 3 BTSM curriculum students are required to develop and complete a research project. This year it was timely to investigate ten years of BTSM graduates and how their lives have been impacted by undertaking a degree in massage therapy. A research project was conducted to review the outcomes from a BTSM education from a graduate’s perspective. Issues examined were: the BTSM curriculum and benefits of degree level education; the employment journey of graduates; their clinical practice patterns; and their satisfaction with their massage career. All Year 3 BTSM students enrolled in the research paper were part of the research team. They were guided and supervised by massage therapy research staff. As 2013 marks the tenth cohort of BTSM graduates, all student researchers graduating in 2013 were also invited to participate in the study.

The research process was highly collaborative and all researchers took an active role in all aspects of the research project including: literature review, research proposal and ethics application, recruitment, creation of data collection tools, data collection and analysis, and dissemination of findings. The research team consisted of 14 Year 3 BTSM
student researchers and 2 research trained massage therapy staff. Work was completed individually, in pairs, in groups, and as a whole team.

Data were collected in two phases: a questionnaire and individual interviews. Firstly, all 2004-2012 BTSM graduates for whom contact details could be sourced were sent an information sheet and invited to participate in the study. Graduates were asked to write their own personal profile in response to the following prompts:

- Please tell us a little bit about what you have done since graduating
- Please tell us a little bit about what you have gained personally and/or professionally from doing a degree and from your BTSM experience
- If you could give some words of advice to BTSM students, what would they be?

The personal details and answers to these questions are reported in the *Snapshots* section of the journal. They are presented in chronological order from 2004-2013 and apart from minor editing, these are reported in the graduates’ own words. Written consent has been granted by the graduates for the printing of their personal details and each snapshot was approved by the graduate prior to printing. These snapshots are a wonderful record of our graduates and their words of advice will provide motivation and focus for current and future BTSM students.

The second part of the questionnaire was anonymous and asked graduates about: their BTSM experiences and benefits of degree level education, their employment journeys, clinical practice patterns, and satisfaction with their massage therapy careers. Findings are presented as group data and are found in this special edition in the form of a peer-reviewed article titled: *Evaluating degree-based education for massage therapy: a survey of Southern Institute of Technology Bachelor of Therapeutic and Sports Massage graduates 2004-2013*. As this is the first investigation in New Zealand into the careers of bachelor degree trained massage therapists, the article is a valuable source of information regarding career and education satisfaction, as well as career challenges. It can be used to provide more accurate advice not only to potential and current students but also to the wider massage therapy industry. This article will also help inform potential and current massage students, educators, researchers, the massage profession, and wider stakeholders about the inherent benefits of degree-based education for massage therapy.

The second phase of the study aimed to tell more detailed stories of life post-BTSM for a smaller number of graduates. Graduates participating in phase one indicated on their questionnaire whether they were willing to be contacted to participate in an interview. After reading the information sheet and giving written consent, the researchers conducted face to face or telephone / Skype interviews with 26 graduates. All interviews were audiotaped, transcribed and thematically analysed. The graduate stories were written from sections of the transcripts and are presented as individual or group stories in the section following the snapshots. The *Graduate Stories* are grouped according to an overarching theme. The themes include: blending therapies, sports, part time, first year graduates, other directions, travel, Trans-Tasman, spa massage, self-employed, and group massage clinic. The graduate stories are varied, interesting and inspirational. The 2013
Year 3 BTSM student researchers said that interviewing past graduates was the highlight of the project for them.

Both staff and students have enjoyed the research topic and process and the benefits of working in a large research team. Conducting research studies with a large team has its challenges. Some of our reflections about the research process and collaboration can be found in the last section of the journal titled: Final words.

Findings from this study are also available in poster form and can be found on the poster page of the New Zealand Massage Therapy Research Centre website: http://nzmtrc.sit.ac.nz/Pages/Posters.aspx

As noted above, the project has been one of collaboration and, accordingly, all authors are acknowledged for the peer-reviewed article, snapshots, and graduate stories included in this journal. While lead authors are identified for some pieces of writing (such as this editorial, ‘Final Words’ and posters) they speak for the full team of ‘2013 Year 3 BTSM researchers’. The ‘2013 Year 3 BTSM researchers’ are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Donna Smith</th>
<th>Chloe Jackson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emma Brown</td>
<td>Sarah Lock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine Cunliffe</td>
<td>Stephanie Marshall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liz de Groot</td>
<td>Bailey McCulloch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chelsie Dimmock</td>
<td>Angela Roy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paige Harris</td>
<td>Hannah Strickett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernie Hewitson</td>
<td>BJ Symon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anita Flannery</td>
<td>Jo Smith</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


As the Special Edition Editors, we would like to thank the other members of our editorial team (Chelsie Dimmock, Chloe Jackson, Sarah Lock, Bailey McCulloch and BJ Symon) for their outstanding work in managing and editing pieces of writing from a large collection of sources, and for the creative banners and art throughout the journal. We would also like to thank Jerry Hoffman, editor of the Southern Institute of Technology Journal of Applied Research (SITJAR) for hosting the journal and the Southern Institute of Technology for assistance with funding the study. To all ‘2013 Year 3 BTSM researchers’, thank you for your contributions to this study and best wishes for your careers in massage therapy. To all our BTSM graduates: thank you so much for your willingness to answer our questions, talk to us, and share your stories about life after a BTSM. It has been really inspiring to hear about your travels, businesses, massage achievements, and new directions.
As massage educators it’s been a pleasure to find out that graduates value their BTSM massage education and their bachelor’s degree - whether they are currently practicing massage therapy or not. It appears that many of the goals of the initial BTSM curriculum developers and the vision of SIT management in supporting this unique degree programme have been met. These goals will be extended as higher education continues to embed itself as a viable and positive educational choice for massage therapists. It has also been lovely to make contact again with many of our graduates and see where their journey with massage has taken them. We value their evaluation of the BTSM curriculum and their input is important as we strive to ensure that the BTSM education not only meets industry needs, but also helps enhance the recognition of massage therapists as credible and effective health professionals.

We wish our graduates all the best for their future. It’s been a privilege to share part of your massage journey.

Jo Smith and Donna Smith
Special Edition Editors (On behalf of the 2013 Year 3 BTSM researchers)
Article

Evaluating degree-based education for massage therapy: a survey of Southern Institute of Technology Bachelor of Therapeutic and Sports Massage graduates 2004-2013


Abstract
Degree-based education for massage therapy is relatively recent. The Bachelor of Therapeutic and Sports Massage (BTSM) was the first massage degree in the Southern Hemisphere and was implemented in 2002 at Southern Institute of Technology (SIT). December 2013 marks the tenth cohort of graduates. The aim of this study was to review the outcomes from a BTSM education from a graduate’s perspective. Issues examined were: the BTSM curriculum and benefits of degree level education, their employment journey, clinical practice patterns, and their satisfaction with their massage career. A self-report questionnaire was posted or emailed to 63 BTSM graduates and anonymous responses were collected from 50 graduates (79.4% return-rate). Key findings were that 90% of graduates worked in the massage industry with the majority indicating they were employed in massage therapy related jobs within three months of graduation. Participants were highly satisfied with their BTSM education and 96% felt that their massage degree education prepared them for working in the industry. Most found their massage career rewarding and they enjoyed helping people and making a difference. When asked, “If you could do it all over, would you still train to be a massage therapist?” 87.5% (45/50) indicated yes, and 90.2% said they would still choose a degree qualification. Consolidation of learning, breadth and depth of knowledge and clinical application, growth as a professional, work readiness, and greater credibility were reported as the key benefits of SIT’s three year massage bachelor’s degree. The survey was a very valuable source of information and will help inform potential and current massage students, educators, researchers, the massage profession, and wider stakeholders about degree-based education for massage therapy and its inherent benefits for the individual and the collective.
Introduction
Higher education, and in particular, bachelor’s degrees are commonly used as the entry practice qualification into a number of health professions in New Zealand such as nursing (Careers New Zealand, 2013), physiotherapy (The Physiotherapy Board of New Zealand, 2013), pharmacy (Pharmacy Council of New Zealand, 2013) and chiropractic (New Zealand Chiropractic Board, 2013). Utilisation of higher education has also been central in the development of many complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) occupations such as acupuncture and naturopathy (Smith, Smith, Baxter & Spronken-Smith, 2012). A bachelor’s degree “provides individuals with a systematic and coherent introduction to a body of knowledge of a recognised major subject” (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2013, p.1). In particular, bachelor’s degree students learn how to critically analyse information and problem solve, formulate written and oral material at a high academic level, become research literate, work independently and develop a higher level of thinking (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2013), and manage increasing depth and complexity of knowledge and skills in unpredictable operational contexts (Warring, 2011, p.1). Put simply, one of the aims of higher education is to “increase the students’ capacity to learn, to provide them with analytic skills and to increase their ability to deal with new information and draw independent conclusions” (Gow & Kember, 1990, p.1). Furthermore, Perna (2005, p. 25) suggests that while it can be challenging to measure the public and private benefits of higher education, degree-based education is not only useful for developing a career, but the skills attained are also functional in many areas of everyday life and may be retained for a lifetime.

Smith, Sullivan & Baxter (2010) outline the development of modern massage therapy education in New Zealand including the implementation of the first degree level qualification for massage therapy, the Bachelor of Therapeutic and Sports Massage (BTSM), in 2002 at the Southern Institute of Technology (SIT). The first students graduated in December 2004 and in 2013 the 10th cohort of students will graduate from the BTSM. While many other healthcare modalities require a bachelor’s or master’s degree to be achieved in order to practice, this is not the case with massage therapy. A massage therapist’s education could involve a “six-month certificate in relaxation massage, a one to two-year diploma in therapeutic massage, or a three-year bachelor’s degree”( Smith et al., 2012, p.24). Despite the benefits of higher education and the potential for greater credibility for the industry, there has been resistance to degree-based education for massage (Smith et al., 2012). However, there is little information about how the massage graduates feel about their bachelor’s degree education in massage therapy.

To help fill this information gap, we surveyed the 2004-2013 BTSM graduates and asked them about their BTSM experience and benefits of degree level education, their employment journey, clinical practice patterns, and their satisfaction with their massage career.
Method
A self-report questionnaire, comprised of four sections, was designed to explore the outcomes of a BTSM education as well as demographic characteristics of the respondents. In the first section (Section A), graduates were asked to write their own snapshot reporting on their journey post graduation, what they had gained from their BTSM education and words of advice to BTSM students. These data are reported as “Snapshots” elsewhere (Smith, D., Brown, E., Cunniffe, C., de Groot, L., Dimmock, C., Harris, P., . . . Smith, J., 2013). Findings from the remaining three sections (Section B-D) are reported below and specifically investigated: the initial and current state of employment of BTSM graduate massage therapists; the importance, effectiveness and usefulness of the BTSM curriculum; the practice patterns of currently practicing graduates; and satisfaction of graduates with their massage therapy career. Previous surveys on alumni research (Bristol, 2002) and massage therapy practice patterns (Smith, Sullivan & Baxter, 2011) guided the development of some questions. Sections B-D were anonymous as Section A was separated from sections B-D on receipt of the survey. The questionnaire primarily asked for descriptive information using closed-ended questions with categorical, ordinal, or numerical response options, however, a small number of open ended questions were included. In the early stages of questionnaire development, an expert panel (Creswell, 2003) consisting of the authors, massage therapists, massage educators, and researchers independently reviewed the draft questions for content, structure, validity, and data analysis applicability. Modifications largely involved formatting and the questionnaire was subsequently pilot tested (n=15) on massage students who were not part of the potential sample to check for ambiguities, and to assess the length of time needed for completion. The Southern Institute of Technology Human Ethics Committee approved the project.

A list of graduating students is reported each year in the local regional newspaper, the Southland Times, and was accessed using the Southland Times archive microfiche files at the Invercargill Public Library. Contact email addresses or phone numbers were accessed for these graduates using a range of approaches including: Massage New Zealand (MNZ) website (the voluntary professional body for massage therapists), the Yellow Pages website, through contacts known to the researchers, and through graduates who remained in contact with each other. In April/May 2013, all contactable graduates were posted or emailed an information sheet and questionnaire and were invited to participate. Two weeks after the initial mailing, a further request for participation was sent to non-respondents. The 2013 year 3 BTSM students, being the 10th cohort of graduates, were also invited to participate; minor modifications were made to the questionnaire to ensure the appropriateness of the questions for this group that was six months away from graduating.

Responses were collected and tabulated by the research team. Data were entered into an Excel spreadsheet for further analysis. Analyses using descriptive statistics (e.g., means, medians, and frequency counts) were generally performed on the total respondent pool; however for a small number of questions, the data from the 2013 ‘graduates’ were not included.
Results

Participant characteristics

Surveys were posted or emailed to 63 of the 81 graduates as contact details were unknown for 18 graduates. Fifty graduates responded to the survey, giving a response rate of 79.4%. Most participants were female (43/50; 86%), NZ European (36/50, 72%), 46.9% (23/49) were aged between 20-29 years, and 92% were currently employed (Table 1). Thirty two percent were current members of Massage New Zealand, 10% held an annual practicing certificate for another health or CAM profession, and while participants had undertaken further related study since graduating, only 4.2% (4/48) of this was at the post-graduate level.

Table 1 Survey of graduates: basic demographic details (n = 50)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong>( ^* ) (n = 50)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZ European</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>72.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZ Māori</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other [Australian 3; UK 2; North American 2; Chinese 2; German 2]</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong> (n = 49)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29 years</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>46.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39 years</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49 years</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;60 years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year of graduation</strong> (n = 50)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-2006</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-2009</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2012</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current employment status</strong>( ^* ) (n = 50)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee Full-time (20+ hours per week)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>32.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee Part-time (&lt;20 hours per week)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self employed Full-time (20+ hours per week)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self employed Part-time (&lt;20 hours per week)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>34.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homemaker</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * Not mutually exclusive
Ninety percent of graduates have worked in the massage industry; 75% (36/48) have been working in the massage industry since graduating, and 14.6% (7/48) did work in the massage industry but are not any more. Only 10.4% of graduates have not worked in the massage industry at all. Just over a fifth of graduates (9/41, 21.9%) have worked overseas with massage therapy (Australia, Rarotonga, and London). The median number of massage related positions held by graduates since graduating was 2, with a range from 1 to 8. Just over a third of graduates (15/42, 35.7%) had experienced occupational health issues or injuries from delivering massage therapy, commonly in areas such as the thumb (40%), wrist (27%), forearm (20%), and back (13%).

**Employment after Graduation**
Approximately 82.1% (23/28) of graduates (2004-2012) indicated that they were employed in massage therapy related jobs within 3 months of graduation. Moreover, 39.3% of 2004-2012 graduates (11/28) were already working part-time as massage therapists in their third year of their BTSM. Massage therapy employment during the third year of study was also indicated by 64.3% (9/14) of 2013 graduates. Forty-two percent of 2004-2012 graduates remained in Invercargill for their first job, 39.4% (13/33) of graduates were located in the rest of the South Island of New Zealand, and 9.1% relocated to the North Island of New Zealand and overseas respectively. Forty-seven percent of 2004-2012 graduates stayed for more than one year but less than three years at their first place of employment, 30% (9/30) stayed for less than a year, and 16.6% (5/30) stayed for three years or more. Starting salaries for 68.8% of graduates (2004-2012) were less than $20,000, with only 25% of graduates earning between $20,000 and $40,000. Only 6.2% of graduates earned more than $40,000 in their first massage related job, however, only 34.6% of graduates worked full time in their massage related job. Table 2 lists the distribution of graduates (2004-2012) in various employment locations, types and settings in their first year after graduation and at the time of the survey. Therapeutic, sports therapy and relaxation massage were common styles used in their first year after graduation. Also common was self employment, often part-time, in a ‘home based clinic’.

**Current Clinical Practice: therapists’ profiles**
The following findings relate to 32 participants who are currently working in clinical practice; 23 from 2004-2012 and 9 from 2013. Most therapists are female (81.3%), NZ European (81.3%), practiced in the South Island (78.1%), worked part-time (57.7%), and were aged between 20-29 years (45.2%, 14/31). However, there were also therapists aged 30-39 years (16.1%), 40-49 years (25.8%), and 50-59 years (12.9%). The number of years practicing massage therapy ranged from six months to 15 years (mean=4.3 years, median = 4 years), and of the 27 therapists practicing in New Zealand 44.4% were members of MNZ. Massage therapy practice is the only source of employment for 63% (19/30) of participants and 65.6% (21/32) of therapists had a current pre-tax massage therapy related income of less than $20,000 (Figure 1). However, of the 11 therapists who reported working full-time in massage therapy, only 18.2% earned less than $20,000;
54.5% earned more than $40,000 and 36.4% earned more than $50,000. Seventy-nine percent (23/29) do not practice any other forms of complementary therapies.

![Figure 1. Current pre-tax massage therapy related income (2004-2013 graduates) (n=32)](image)

Of the 6 therapists who practiced CAM therapies, all combined complementary therapies with their massage treatments; CAM therapies reported were dry needling (3), acupuncture (2), reflexology (1), colon hydrotherapy (1) and rock taping (1).
Table 2  Employment characteristics (n=33)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>First year 1 (n=33)</th>
<th>2013 2 (n = 32)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Invercargill</td>
<td>42.4 (14)</td>
<td>46.8 (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest of South Island, NZ</td>
<td>39.4 (13)</td>
<td>31.3 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Island, NZ</td>
<td>9.1 (3)</td>
<td>6.3 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>6.1 (2)</td>
<td>12.5 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other [UK 1]</td>
<td>3.0 (1)</td>
<td>3.1 (1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Style*</th>
<th>First year 1 (n = 31)</th>
<th>2013 2 (n = 32)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Therapeutic / Remedial</td>
<td>90.3 (28)</td>
<td>96.9 (31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports therapy</td>
<td>77.4 (24)</td>
<td>87.5 (28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relaxation</td>
<td>74.2 (23)</td>
<td>62.5 (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic rehabilitation</td>
<td>41.9 (13)</td>
<td>59.4 (19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acute rehabilitation</td>
<td>35.5 (11)</td>
<td>46.9 (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spa therapy / Beauty</td>
<td>16.1 (5)</td>
<td>12.5 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnancy / Infant</td>
<td>6.5 (2)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy</td>
<td>3.2 (1)</td>
<td>9.4 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lymphatic drainage</td>
<td>3.2 (1)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting*</th>
<th>First year 1 (n = 30)</th>
<th>2013 2 (n = 32)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home based clinic</td>
<td>53.3 (16)</td>
<td>40.6 (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sporting environment e.g. gym, sports teams/events</td>
<td>43.3 (13)</td>
<td>43.8 (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community based clinic</td>
<td>36.7 (11)</td>
<td>40.6 (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-disciplinary health practice</td>
<td>23.3 (7)</td>
<td>21.9 (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism / Health resorts</td>
<td>13.3 (4)</td>
<td>12.5 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospitals / rehabilitation centres</td>
<td>3.3 (1)</td>
<td>3.1 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community / mental health centres</td>
<td>3.3 (1)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other [education 2; mobile 2; corporate 1, clubs/schools 1]</td>
<td>6.6 (2)</td>
<td>12.5 (4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure*</th>
<th>First year 1 (n=28)</th>
<th>2013 2 (n=32)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self employed / own business</td>
<td>60.7 (17/28)</td>
<td>75.0 (24/32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>28.6 (8/28)</td>
<td>12.5 (4/32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self employed / Subcontractor</td>
<td>25.0 (7/28)</td>
<td>18.8 (6/32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent / solo practice</td>
<td>50.0 (12/24)</td>
<td>34.4 (11/32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within a group of massage therapists</td>
<td>45.8 (11/24)</td>
<td>28.1 (9/32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alongside other health professionals</td>
<td>29.6 (18/24)</td>
<td>25.0 (8/32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part time (&lt;20 hours per week)</td>
<td>65.4 (17/26)</td>
<td>57.6 (15/26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full time (20+ hours per week)</td>
<td>34.6 (9/26)</td>
<td>42.3 (11/26)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * Not mutually exclusive

1  2004-2012 graduates: First year after graduation
2  2004-2013 graduates: Participants in current clinical practice in 2013
**Current Clinical Practice: treatment characteristics**

Massage therapy techniques used by those in current clinical practice included: therapeutic massage (96.9%), sports massage (93.8%), trigger point therapy (93.8%), NMT (87.5%), relaxation massage (84.4%), MFR (78.1%), pregnancy massage (62.5%), lymphatic drainage massage (50%), chair massage (12.5%), aromatherapy (6.3%), hot stones (6.3%), Chinese massage (6.3%), and energy techniques (6.3%). When asked for the three most common types of massage provided, respondents reported: therapeutic massage (90.6%), sports massage (50%), and trigger point therapy (40.6%). The two most common client conditions seen in clinical practice were back and neck/shoulder conditions; Table 3 reports the range of client issues or conditions treated by massage therapists in the last 12 months.

**Table 3** Client issues or conditions treated by massage therapists in the last 12 months* \((n = 32)\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>(n)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Back pain or problem</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Neck/shoulder pain or problem</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Joint pain or stiffness</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Regular recovery or maintenance massage</td>
<td>96.9</td>
<td>96.9</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Sports injuries</td>
<td>96.9</td>
<td>96.9</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Headache or migraine</td>
<td>93.8</td>
<td>93.8</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Relaxation &amp; stress reduction</td>
<td>93.8</td>
<td>93.8</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Non-sporting injury</td>
<td>90.6</td>
<td>90.6</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Arthritis or fibromyalgia</td>
<td>81.3</td>
<td>81.3</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Disability/long-term illness/chronic condition</td>
<td>78.1</td>
<td>78.1</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term illness or temporary condition</td>
<td>71.9</td>
<td>71.9</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wellness</td>
<td>65.6</td>
<td>65.6</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety or depression</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual well being</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insomnia or trouble sleeping</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postoperative pain</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cancer</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beauty or leisure routine</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lymphodema</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asthma</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other respiratory conditions</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * Not mutually exclusive
Current Clinical Practice: assessment, records, and self care

The majority of massage therapists (96.8%) undertook client assessment for their ‘typical client’, most commonly using assessment methods of ‘tissue assessment using palpation’ (93.8%), ‘active range of motion’ measures (90.6%), ‘subjective assessment/ history taking’ (87.5%), ‘pain measures’ (87.5%), ‘postural assessment’ (75.0%), ‘resisted tests’ (75.0%) and ‘passive range of motion’ (62.5%). Tests considered more ‘specialised’ [i.e. ‘muscle length tests’ (43.8%), ‘orthopaedic tests’ (40.6%), ‘neurological tests’ (34.4%), and outcome measures (6.3%)] were less commonly used. Clinical notes were made by 96.9% of therapists, mostly by hand (96.8%), although one client used a computer to record client notes. Approximately 97% of therapists reported typically providing self-care recommendations (Table 4).

Table 4 Self-care recommendations typically provided to clients by massage therapists* (n = 32)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Water intake, increase</td>
<td>90.6 (29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movement exercise: active</td>
<td>87.5 (28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stretches</td>
<td>84.4 (27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body awareness / posture</td>
<td>75.0 (24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest</td>
<td>68.8 (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movement exercise: resisted</td>
<td>62.5 (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hot/cold therapy</td>
<td>56.3 (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breath work</td>
<td>46.9 (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trigger point release</td>
<td>37.5 (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visualisation</td>
<td>16.5 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>3.1 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>othera</td>
<td>15.6 (5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *Not mutually exclusive
a self massage with foam roller or ball (2), sleep (1), ergonomic information (1), dietary therapy/supplements (1)

Therapists also reported a wide range of self-care measures that they used to support themselves in their work. For example, one therapist reported needing to “take time for me to enjoy friends and family, flax weaving course for fun, regular sleep patterns, eating less sugar and drinking less coffee, cut out chocolate, positive thinking, and stretching”, and another said “I get lots of massage and stay fit and strong through running and strength work”. “Exercise and managing client bookings well to avoid burning out” as well as “not over working, stopping if I have pain, and adjusting how I use my body” were common strategies. Frequently reported strategies included: stretching (25), massage (self / from others) (23), and exercise (16). Less commonly reported strategies included: techniques/body mechanics and meditation/spirituality (5), good diet and water (4), sleep/rest, workload management, ice, and mobilizations/chiropractor (3), relaxation/socializing/hobbies, heat, reflexology, dry needling, acupuncture and nerve flossing (1).
**Current Clinical Practice: referral patterns**

Therapists commonly referred clients to physiotherapists (65.6%), osteopaths (53.1%), general practitioners (43.8%), and chiropractors (40.6%). Massage therapists also received referrals from these four health professional groups. The referral patterns are listed in Table 5.

**Current Clinical Practice: work load**

The number of weeks of massage therapy practice in a typical year ranged from 15-52 weeks (mean=42.6, median=45); 84.3% of therapists reported practicing for more than 40 weeks in the year. The number of clients treated with massage in a typical week ranged from 4 to 36 clients (Figure 2), with an average of 13.7 hours of direct client care per week (Figure 2). For those therapists practicing full-time, the average hours of client care per week was 23.2 hours (255/11) and 21.5 (215/10) clients per week. The most frequent client fee per treatment was NZ$60 per hour in a community based clinic; however there were large variations in treatment costs and durations both within and between treatment locations, and some treatments were free (Table 6).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5</th>
<th>Referral patterns* (n=32)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MT refer TO Respondents % (n)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physiotherapist</td>
<td>65.6 (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osteopath</td>
<td>53.1 (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor / General practitioner</td>
<td>43.8 (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chiropractor</td>
<td>40.6 (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitness/gym instructor/personal trainer</td>
<td>18.8 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naturopath</td>
<td>12.5 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Podiatrist</td>
<td>9.4 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massage therapist</td>
<td>6.3 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acupuncturist</td>
<td>6.3 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutritionist</td>
<td>3.1 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surgeon</td>
<td>3.1 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaches</td>
<td>3.1 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craniosacral</td>
<td>3.1 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilates instructor</td>
<td>3.1 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dentist</td>
<td>3.1 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beautician</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * Not mutually exclusive
Figure 2  Frequency of client numbers (n=30) and hours of direct client care (n=31) in a typical week

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>% (n)</th>
<th>Mode Cost (NZ$)</th>
<th>Range b (NZ$)</th>
<th>Mode Duration (min)</th>
<th>Range b (min)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At a clinic (not your home)</td>
<td>77.4 (24)</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>30-60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>30-88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At a clinic in your home</td>
<td>48.4 (15)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0-140</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>45-120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At a sports event</td>
<td>45.2 (14)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0-99</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10-60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At a health spa / beauticians</td>
<td>12.9 (4)</td>
<td>nil</td>
<td>42-90</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>30-60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the workplace / corporate</td>
<td>3.2 (1)</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At your client’s home</td>
<td>3.2 (1)</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile</td>
<td>3.2 (1)</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: a Not mutually exclusive  

Range b Minimum - Maximum
**Education: entry into the BTSM**

Graduates’ had a wide range and in many cases a number of occupations prior to entering the BTSM. These ranged from retail / hospitality jobs, high school students and support workers to factory workers and sports coordinators (Table 7). Participants’ qualifications at the time of entry ranged from ‘none’ (8%) to ‘higher degree (Masters, Doctorate, Professional degree)’ (2%) with the majority holding a ‘vocational/trade qualification’ (42%) or were a ‘high school graduate” (40%); 8% held a ‘bachelors degree’. Thirty six percent of graduates had successfully completed a certificate in massage prior to entering the degree programme.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prior occupations of BTSM graduates* (n = 50)</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retail / hospitality</td>
<td>60.0 (30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school student</td>
<td>30.0 (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>14.0 (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm work / farmer</td>
<td>10.0 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support work / care giver</td>
<td>10.0 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massage therapist</td>
<td>8.0 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher / instructor / educator</td>
<td>8.0 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>8.0 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labourer</td>
<td>4.0 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artist / musician / photographer</td>
<td>4.0 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAM therapist</td>
<td>2.0 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factory worker</td>
<td>2.0 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports coordinator</td>
<td>2.0 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>2.0 (1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *Not mutually exclusive

Graduates were asked to reflect on why they chose to study massage therapy. Statements such as: “I have always had an interest in how the body works and also a need to help people. With massage I could integrate both successfully” and “the benefits my family has had from it in the past, the hands on approach and the reward from helping better someone's life” were indicative of the general themes. The top seven items and the percentage of graduates making the observations were:

- To work with and help people (38.8%)
- Previous knowledge / positive experience of massage therapy (34.7%)
- An interest in anatomy, physiology, and the human body (13.2%)
- An interest in health care – CAM in particular (20.4%)
- Using touch / hands-on treatment (16.3%)
- To be involved in a sports environment (14.3%)
- To solve problems and be involved in rehabilitation (12.2%)
Graduates were also asked why they had chosen to study at SIT. Five primary reasons were reported:

- Affordable due to SIT’s Zero Fees Scheme i.e. no tuition fees (64.6%)
- Location i.e. close to home, cheaper living, away from big cities, Invercargill facilities (47.9%)
- Doing a degree i.e. higher level of education, the only degree in NZ (47.9%)
- Quality of programme i.e. good reputation, great learning environment, well qualified tutors, small class sizes (22.9%)
- Content of programme, especially sports papers (16.7%)

The opportunity to live and explore somewhere new and the opportunity to study abroad were also noted.

**Education: evaluating the BTSM**

A number of components of the BTSM programme were evaluated (Table 8). First graduates were asked how important it was for massage therapists to know about or be able to apply the component knowledge and skills. Second, they were asked to evaluate the appropriateness of the time allocation as either ‘absent’, ‘insufficient’, ‘sufficient’, ‘excessive’ or ‘don’t remember’. For all but two components, over half of the graduates thought the time allocation was ‘sufficient’. When the percentage indicating ‘excessive’ time was subtracted from the percentage indicating ‘absent or inadequate’ time, components that 25% of graduates felt needed additional time were: Spa Therapy, Introduction to Pharmacology, and Hot Stones. However, the importance of spa therapy and hot stones varied markedly between graduates. Using the same 25% threshold, it was thought that too much time was allocated to ‘conducting case studies’.

The usefulness of a BTSM education to a graduate’s personal or professional development within or outside of massage therapy was also evaluated (Table 9). A wide range of technical and generic knowledge related areas were seen as useful as were communication, thinking skills, and generic work based skills.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curriculum areas presented to participants</th>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Allocation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Little or No Importance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anatomy &amp; physiology</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apply safe, effective &amp; efficient massage interventions</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movement analysis</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>98.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behave legally and ethically</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>98.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assess the client</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>98.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate client centred care</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>98.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate effectively</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>97.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principles of massage therapy</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>95.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure client and practitioner safety</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>95.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan and implement a massage therapy intervention and refer as appropriate</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>95.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical reasoning</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>95.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuromuscular therapy</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>95.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate massage therapy interventions and refer as appropriate</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>95.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educate clients effectively</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>95.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathology</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>93.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musculoskeletal pain management</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>93.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence and accountability in clinical practice</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>93.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indications for massage therapy</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>91.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports massage therapy</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>89.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myofascial release</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>89.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise rehabilitation</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>87.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence for massage therapy</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>85.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Record taking / keeping</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>85.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking part in professional networks</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>81.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflect on own practice</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>77.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lymphatic drainage</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>75.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychosocial dimensions of health care</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>73.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small business management</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>73.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relaxation massage therapy</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>73.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct case studies</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>69.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnancy massage therapy</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>67.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural safety/awareness</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>65.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysing the value of research by others</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>55.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research methods</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>49.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to pharmacology</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>41.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undertake beginning research</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>40.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spa therapy</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>38.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hot stones</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 9 Evaluating the usefulness of BTSM knowledge and skills to a graduate’s personal or professional development within or outside of massage therapy (n = 50)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge and skills presented to participants</th>
<th>Little or No use</th>
<th>Useful or Very Useful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gaining an awareness of your own body</td>
<td>50 0.0%</td>
<td>96.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaining confidence</td>
<td>50 0.0%</td>
<td>94.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving or receiving nurturing touch</td>
<td>50 0.0%</td>
<td>92.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being able to empathise and work productively with people from a wide range of backgrounds</td>
<td>50 2.0%</td>
<td>92.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication skills: written and oral</td>
<td>50 0.0%</td>
<td>88.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employability skills</td>
<td>49 4.1%</td>
<td>83.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical skills</td>
<td>50 0.0%</td>
<td>82.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem solving skills</td>
<td>50 4.0%</td>
<td>82.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being able to readjust a plan of action in the light of what happens as it is implemented</td>
<td>50 2.0%</td>
<td>82.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terminology skills e.g. medical language</td>
<td>49 2.0%</td>
<td>81.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being able to identify from a mass of information the core issue in a situation</td>
<td>50 0.0%</td>
<td>78.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical thinking skills</td>
<td>49 0.0%</td>
<td>77.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being able to manage my own ongoing professional learning and development</td>
<td>50 4.0%</td>
<td>76.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being able to set and justify priorities</td>
<td>49 2.0%</td>
<td>75.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to reflect on my performance and modify as needed</td>
<td>50 2.0%</td>
<td>74.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork skills</td>
<td>50 4.0%</td>
<td>72.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information management skills</td>
<td>49 0.0%</td>
<td>61.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning how to learn</td>
<td>49 10.2%</td>
<td>61.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research literacy skills i.e. find and critique information</td>
<td>49 14.3%</td>
<td>51.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information technology skills</td>
<td>50 18.0%</td>
<td>46.0%</td>
</tr>
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**Education: suggestions for change in the BTSM curriculum**

Ninety-six percent of graduates (48/50) felt that their massage degree education prepared them for working in the industry. However, 52.1% (25/48) also felt some elements of the BTSM could be changed or removed and 62.5% (30/48) suggested additional topics that they would have liked to have been covered in their BTSM. Thematic analysis of suggestions indicated that there were no BTSM elements to be removed. As the course has changed over the ten years, the suggested additions that are not currently part of the BTSM programme included: dry needling (13.3%), pharmacology including biochemistry and naturopathic remedies (10%), reflexology (6.7%), kinesiotaping (6.7%), Bowen therapy (6.7%), computer skills (6.7%), spa therapies (6.7%), craniosacral therapy (3.3%) and reiki and meridians of the body (3.3%). The top five items that graduates would like to have changed in their massage therapy education and the percentage of graduates making the observation were:

- More time on rehabilitation (injury knowledge, exercise prescription, strapping, CRAC) (16.0%)
- More neurological understanding and nerve mobilization (12.0%)
- More pathology (8.0%)
- More information / practice on MFR, trigger points and lymphatic drainage (8.0%)
- More opportunity for sports massage provision (8.0%)
Lastly, in response to the question “Do you perceive value in completing the 3rd year of the degree programme as opposed to finishing after 2 years with a diploma?”, 93.7% (45/48) said yes; Table 10 illustrates the reasons given for this majority view. Two graduates gave reasons for not valuing the third year, however, their responses indicate mixed views: “Society isn’t educated enough to realise the difference and job opportunities are much the same for 2nd and 3rd year graduates, but personally I gained a lot more confidence during my third year and believe the 3rd year graduates tend to be safer practitioners” and “overall, I think I found the third year good for me personally, as it gave me an opportunity to refine my skills, but I think, that alternatively, it would have been just as possible to do this in the work place.”

A Massage Therapy Career: most important skills for success
In response to a request for the most important skills needed for success in massage therapy practice, a total of 144 responses were collected from 49 graduates. The top seven items were:

- Communication skills / people skills (55.1%)
- Assessment, clinical reasoning and hands-on skills (55.1%)
- Massage knowledge / understanding the human body (51.0%)
- Passion, focus, perseverance and drive (30.6%)
- Client focused / enjoy working with and helping people (24.5%)
- Business sense: skills, networking, promote yourself (20.4%)
- Continuing education / willingness to continue learning / ability to source and critique information (20.4%)

A Massage Therapy Career: aspects of the massage therapy role
Graduates thought that ‘a positive outcome of treatment / make a difference to peoples quality of life’ (76.2%) and ‘helping people, caring for others, and being of service through touch’ (38.1%) were the most satisfying aspect of being a massage therapist or being involved with massage therapy. Other satisfying aspects included: ‘educating clients / helping people to help themselves’ (19.0%), ‘meeting and interacting with lots of people’ (14.3%), and ‘set my own hours / work for myself / easy to manage business’ (14.3%). When asked ‘what things you would like to change about your massage therapy career?’ 36.1% of the 35 responses said ‘nothing’. The next top two things reported were ‘make time to learn more knowledge and skills / modalities and go to more conferences’ (11.1%) and a ‘bigger income’ (8.3%). Graduates were also asked to identify the biggest professional problems they had in their massage journey post graduation. The most common responses from 41 graduates were as follows:

- building a client base and starting/ building a business (39.0%)
- poor image and low level of professional recognition (24.4%)
- low level of public and health professional awareness of what we do and the effectiveness and benefits of massage (24.4%).

Celebrating ten years of BTSM graduates
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Example of quotes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time and support to consolidate clinical reasoning and practice / everything comes together</td>
<td>“It’s really good professional development, the research is really important and you grow a lot as a therapist in the 3rd year. Everything comes together.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“The third year allowed time for consolidation of learning and looking at the broader impact of massage therapy within New Zealand. Also it allowed time for reflection and clinical practice in a number of different settings.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional development / growth as a therapist / more confidence</td>
<td>Third year “brings a deeper knowledge to what you have learnt with more hands on and a chance to develop yourself in certain areas and become your own therapist. Very good opportunity for confidence building.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“I found that as the 3rd year progressed it gave me more confidence on my own… but with a safety net of asking for help when I needed. I remember noticing how the tutors really let (made!) us work on our own (as opposed to previous years by your side holding hands kind of thing) and of course it was all for preparation out in the big bad world of reality.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Major growth happened for me in the 3rd year. I think the 3rd year is what prepares you most for work in the industry.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learn new knowledge / topics / extra skills</td>
<td>“Absolutely yes. Year three added depth of knowledge (like special population studies, psychosocial aspects) and confidence (year three). Year 1 and 2 are a huge intake of material and experience, year three gives us a chance to let it gel while taking on more aspects that we cover in year three.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Yes, I learnt a lot of extra techniques in the final year and it allowed me to be a ‘fuller’ therapist with more options. It also made me appreciate the importance of research, not only with keeping up with current research, but also the importance of my own.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greater credibility for self and the industry</td>
<td>“Yes, earning the title of degree, BTSM adds credibility.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>It provides “higher education and greater credibility for the industry.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>More employable</td>
<td>“You graduate with a good deal more knowledge and that really reflects in your work, other healthcare professions really respect that. Also it makes you more employable.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The difference in confidence is massive, I felt that everything comes together in the 3rd year it all just clicks and makes sense. Also having a degree in massage when looking for employment puts you well above the others from my experience.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciate the importance of research</td>
<td>“Learning the research process was important for future growth of the industry. Business studies were essential and further clinical reasoning skills being tested cemented what had been learned in the previous years.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can now study at postgraduate level</td>
<td>“Yes I do think the third year was of great value. The research, and the extra clinical reasoning and therapeutic massage skills are worth it. Also the degree gives me the option of studying at a postgraduate level, or teaching English overseas or doing a year of study to become a teacher etc. The degree encourages people to take what I do seriously.”</td>
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</table>
A Massage Therapy Career: would they do it all again?

When asked, “If you could do it all over, would you still train to be a massage therapist?” 87.5% (45/50) indicated yes; only 7.5% (3/40) were either unsure while 5.0% (2/40) said probably not. When asked “if you could do it all over, would you still do a degree qualification?” 90.2% (37/41) replied either definitely or probably; only one graduate said ‘probably not’. Explanations for this choice included: “degree based education opens many doors and has given me many useful skills both on a personal and professional level”, “I like the credibility it brings, and I always wanted a degree”, “Completing the degree was the best thing I have done personally and although no longer practicing, it helped with my career”, and “I think everyone should reach for the highest level they can achieve and use that knowledge to be the best practitioner of whatever they choose to study. It’s about the learning journey and personal growth, which is more than exams.”

Low income levels were the primary reason for massage therapists leaving the industry; for example, “while I have loved being a massage therapist over the last few years, I am finding the low income level and unpredictable work hours stressful”. However, of the 36 graduates currently working in the massage industry, 94.3% (33/35) planned to stay in the massage profession. Common reasons for staying were: “I am passionate about massage”, “I love it and my thriving business. I can’t see myself doing anything else”, and “it is a great career, very rewarding. I like the flexibility to work my hours of choice. I like helping others.” Others qualified their response saying, “yes - in a part-time capacity. It is a skill that will always bring in additional income, and it is a great way to help others” and “I will stay in the industry as long as my body allows me to”. For the seven graduates who ‘did work in the industry but not any more’ five planned to stay in the industry, saying, “I’d like to get back into doing more massage but only on a part-time basis” and “I love that massage will always be available to me to utilise as I need.”

Discussion

Results from this survey provided information on the demographics of massage therapists, which were found to be similar in terms of gender and ethnicity to that reported in a previous New Zealand study (Smith et al., 2011). However, the participants in this study held or were in their final phases of completing a bachelor’s degree in massage therapy, predominantly worked in the South Island of NZ, were generally younger, and less than half were members of MNZ.

Massage therapy – a satisfying career

This study suggests that a career in massage therapy appeals to people from a wide range of ages, occupations and qualifications, who are motivated by an interest in health, the body, touch/massage, and who want to work with and help people. Many were quickly employed and were highly satisfied with their careers. Most found their massage therapy career rewarding, and they enjoyed helping people and making a difference. The majority of graduates found employment within the massage industry and most remained in massage therapy practice in New Zealand. With low attrition rates and few therapists moving overseas, there is a possibility of an oversupply of massage therapists in the future.
However, as massage therapy is still a growing industry (Smith et al., 2012) and with many therapists practising in a part-time capacity, this may not be an issue.

At a glance the starting annual incomes for massage therapists may appear low, however, when considering that about two-thirds of the graduates worked part-time in their first massage related job, the income reported may not equate to a traditional 40 hour work week, so the hourly rate may be competitive. Less than twenty hours per week along with the flexibility of work hours appears to be highly valued attributes of the job for many. Massage therapy can offer those that desire part-time work a good part-time income and a fulfilling work environment. When using $40,000 to $50,000 as a general income for those in full-time massage clinical practice (20+ hours per week), the pre-tax massage therapy related weekly income equates to $769 to $961; this income is comparable to the New Zealand June 2013 quarter median weekly income of $767 to $979 for people in paid employment (Statistics New Zealand, 2013). Because this survey asked respondents to indicate a range within which their income fell, it is impossible to calculate the precise average income of the respondents. Nevertheless, the data gathered provides insight on the economic realities of massage therapy practice. However, with the majority of graduates saying they would still train to be a massage therapist if they could do it all over again, and the majority in current clinical practice planning to stay in the massage profession, income appears to not be a limitation to their sense of career satisfaction.

**Practice patterns**

Unlike the practice patterns reported by Smith et al. (2011) in a national survey of MNZ massage therapists, a higher percentage of therapists in this study tended to work part-time and perhaps as a consequence, the number of client visits and hours of direct client care per week were slightly lower. All three modes of practice, namely ‘solo,’ ‘massage group practices’ and ‘multidisciplinary clinics alongside other health professionals’ were common; yet despite such similarities, more BTSM graduates were working in massage group practices, or working from a home-based clinic, perhaps reflective of the part-time nature of their work, or the less population dense localities.

The client issues or conditions treated were very similar with back and neck pain and regular recovery or maintenance massage being commonly treated by therapists in both studies (Smith et al., 2011); however, a higher proportion of BTSM qualified massage therapists reported treating sports injuries. The massage therapy techniques used were congruent with the study of MNZ therapists (Smith et al., 2011) where therapeutic massage, relaxation massage, sports massage and trigger point therapy were common. BTSM qualified massage therapists reported more use of NMT and less use of onsite chair massage. Referral patterns were also similar with the exception of referrals to or from general practitioners being less in the current study. Assessment practices were generally more comprehensive with a higher percentage of participants reporting use of resisted tests, orthopaedic tests and neurological tests.

Just over a third of graduates reported occupational health issues, a finding similar to that noted by Smith et al. (2011). Holistic and extensive self care practices were evident with a 🎉

Celebrating ten years of BTSM graduates
focus on physical and emotional capacity and workload management. Further research is needed to understand the occupational health issues and strategies employed to reduce injuries.

On the whole, there are strong similarities in practice patterns between those BTSM qualified massage therapists and those of MNZ massage therapists (Smith et al., 2011). The minor differences noted may result from the variations in education level and content, age, the South Island / Invercargill context, or the inclusion of practice patterns data from nine 2013 ‘graduates’ in clinical practice who were also engaged in BTSM study. It will be important to investigate practice patterns of massage degree graduates again in five or so years to see if there is any influence on clinical practice patterns, business and career opportunities, and the impact on the wider massage therapy and allied health industry as a whole.

**Degree based education for massage therapy - a success**

Assessing the quality of the BTSM curriculum was not an objective of the study. What was of interest was whether the BTSM prepared graduates for a career in massage therapy. More than half of the graduates felt that the majority of topics within the BTSM were ‘important’ or ‘very important’ and that the time allocated to most topics was sufficient. They also felt that the BTSM successfully prepared them for working in the industry. While the BTSM curriculum varied slightly throughout 2002-2013 the information is valuable in that it allows educators to feel confident that the curriculum is meeting the needs of graduates and the industry. Moreover, as communication, thinking skills, and generic work based skills were reported as being useful to a graduate’s personal or professional development within or outside of massage therapy, it suggests that there are potential benefits for everyday life and other career paths.

All of the skills reported by participants as necessary for success in massage practice are currently taught within the BTSM. However, these findings provide educators and students insight as to their importance and may allow a greater emphasis within the curriculum. Given that many graduates are self-employed, it may be prudent to provide more business training for students, and emphasise development of skills required for self-employment. These findings also offer awareness into areas where it may be possible to reallocate time to other existing or new topic areas. As that there were no elements to be removed, it will be a challenge to curriculum developers to add content topics within the credit allocation. However, there is scope to highlight some topics, such as rehabilitation, as well as to alter teaching and assessment strategies to provide minor modifications. Furthermore, within the current curriculum there is an opportunity for students to partially tailor their learning to cover their specific area of interest. Some of the recommended additional topics could be listed for students to elect.

Degree-based education for massage therapists is new both internationally and within New Zealand. Furthermore, adoption by the massage industry of this higher level of massage qualification has been slow (Smith et al., 2012) and the massage diploma (generally a 1-2
year qualification) is still the most prevalent entry practice qualification of MNZ massage therapists (Smith et al., 2011). Therefore, it was pertinent to ask graduates about the value in doing an extra year’s study for their BTSM. Their responses highlight consolidation of learning, breadth and depth of knowledge and clinical application, growth as a professional, work readiness, and greater credibility for themselves and the industry. These views compare favourably with the goals of higher education, including the capacity to learn and gain skills to deal with new and complex information, while developing as professionals (Gow & Kember, 1990; Hammer, Bruce, Beardsley, & Easton, 2003; Higgs & Edwards, 1999; Warring, 2011). Likewise, the credibility gained from having a bachelor’s degree in massage has also been reported as a benefit of higher education by other health professions (Kelner, Wellman, Welsh & Boon, 2006).

**Challenges for the development of the massage profession**

It is of concern that less than half of the graduates in clinical practice belong to MNZ, the professional body. The low level of MNZ membership has been reported previously (Smith et al., 2010). Future research is needed to gain insight into why massage therapists do and do not join MNZ. Based on this study, it is recommended that the phenomenon of massage therapy being a part-time career is considered when asking these questions. It is also suggested that MNZ could help address some of the biggest professional problems that therapists had in their massage journey post graduation, namely: building a business, the low level of professional recognition / massage image, and the low level of awareness of effectiveness and benefits of massage therapy. Doing so may help boost MNZ membership and may help improve massage therapy incomes.

Furthermore, given that the participants in this study have found significant value in their bachelor’s degree education, the professional body needs to consider the positive role that degree-based education can have for the future development of the New Zealand massage therapy industry, particularly the role that higher education plays in the development of professional credibility, recognition and professional expertise (Faucher, 2011). Similarly, massage degree education providers need to review the potential barriers to higher education (Smith, Smith & Spronken-Smith, 2010) and consider options for contributing to initial and continuing education and professional development of massage therapists. Development of individual and collective professional expertise and credibility could be further enhanced by offering a diploma to degree upgrade programme that provides credit for the diploma qualification, professional development and clinical practice experience for diploma qualified massage therapists in clinical practice.

**Limitations**

A strength of this study was the high response rate, reflecting the views of 60% of the graduates from the programme over 10 years. However, the number of graduates (n=50) meant that evaluation of subgroups (e.g. part-time/full-time; 2004-2006 / 2007-2009 / 2010-2012) was not possible, and the high percentage of graduates practicing in the South Island means that care needs to be taken with the generalisability of practice patterns. It could also be argued that the survey could have been distributed in May 2014 to allow the...
10th cohort of graduates some time to enter the workforce. However, it was timely that this review was undertaken in 2013, and therefore adjustments were made where necessary to report 2004-2012 findings. Nevertheless, this was the first survey of BTSM qualified massage therapists and provides a useful insight into a career in massage therapy and characteristics of massage therapy practice by this group of therapists.

Summary
Surveys of graduates are a useful evaluative tool. This survey has provided data on career and education satisfaction, as well as career challenges that can be used to more accurately advise potential and current students and the wider massage therapy industry. The information can also be used by educators to evaluate the relevance and effectiveness of curricula and guide modifications. This study is the first investigation into the careers of bachelor degree trained massage therapists and as such has reported a useful descriptive account of massage therapy service provision and has provided a valuable reference point from which future massage practice trends can be evaluated. Degree level massage education with its transferable skills and professional growth may be attractive to school leavers or those seeking a change in career. The feedback evaluating the BTSM programme has clearly shown benefits of knowledge and skill consolidation, professional growth, and work readiness that bachelor degree based education offers a massage therapist individually, and knowledge and credibility for the massage industry as a collective. These findings may provide understanding for those in the massage therapy profession in New Zealand or internationally, who are still hesitant about the value of degree-based education for massage therapists.

References


Graduate Snapshots
Celebrating ten years of BTSM graduates
Samantha Hunt
Name at graduation: Samantha Corner
Graduated: 2004
Current Age: 46
Current Occupation: Terms of Trade Drafter
Current Location: Napier NZ

What I have done since graduation. I owned my own massage clinic for a while, before selling it to work as a massage therapist in Rarotonga, Cook Islands. Since then I have travelled a lot more, and now only do massage occasionally after injuring my thumb and wrist from doing too much massage. I still have a strong interest in massage, and plan to re-start my own business on a small scale in the near future. Although I have been out of the industry for several years, I have found the skills and knowledge I gained through my degree to be invaluable in many areas of my life. I gain immense satisfaction from being able to contribute to someone’s wellbeing through the modality of massage.

What I gained from the BTSM. I was challenged a lot during the course of my BTSM education, and learnt a lot about myself, as well as about the massage-related aspects. For example, I found the communication & health psychology papers taught me a lot about myself and my mindsets about a range of issues, and made me much more aware of other people’s also. Having recently suffered an ankle injury, which required surgery, I also find it invaluable to be able to communicate with health professionals on their level, rather than as someone who knows nothing about anatomy and physiology.

Words of advice to BTSM students. Pay more attention to self-care. When you find something you love, you don’t want to be put out of action as I was, due to over-doing it and injuring yourself.

Brendan Bird
Graduated: 2004
Current Age: 49
Current Occupation: Traditional Acupuncturist
Current Location: Kaikoura, NZ
acubirdi@gmail.com

What I have done since graduating. The journey of discovery continued after graduation from BTSM. The following year I enrolled in a 4-year acupuncture programme and relocated to Christchurch. Running a small massage clinic from home was satisfying; and relocating to Kaikoura I topped up the acupuncture track while running my acupuncture clinic in Kaikoura I topped up the acupuncture track while running my acupuncture clinic in Kaikoura I topped up the acupuncture track while running my acupuncture clinic in Kaikoura I topped up the acupuncture track. Bodywork is still incorporated in my practice & NMT especially so. Having a health care role in this small community and its amazing energetic location sustains me in body, mind & spirit. The corner stones of my current practice were laid during the BTSM.

What I gained from the BTSM. To look at the perspective of the bigger picture and to stand up for what is right.

Words of advice to BTSM students. Know your anatomy, practice/practice/practice. Avoid cruise ship employment. You are better than that. Conditions for MT’s are poor and work is more aligned with beauty therapy. I completed a contract as a ships acupuncturist. We were treated a lot better with accommodation & remuneration, be patient when building patient/client base. Make continuing education part of your life.
Brittany Kelliher

Graduated: 2004
Current Age: 29
Current Occupation: Massage Therapist
Current Location: Christchurch, NZ

What I have done since graduating. When I graduated I left for my OE straight away. In London I worked as a nanny and did some weekend massage for a Gaelic football team. This was where my love of sports massage began. On my return to NZ I started working at Russley Sports Massage, which I have since taken over ownership of and I now employ four other massage therapists. I am really enjoying still having time with hands on clients but also love working on my business and expanding.

What I gained from the BTSM. Not only did I gain the necessary skills and knowledge to become a confident massage therapist but I also have gained insight to the health of my own body. I now take much better care of myself emotionally and physically.

Words of advice to BTSM students. Get your hands on as many bodies as possible when studying. It will help to cement the knowledge you are gaining in class and grow your confidence. It may even decrease the amount of study you will need to do for anatomy.

Angela Sharp

Graduated: 2004
Current Age: 33
Current Occupation: Area Manager
Current Location: Auckland, NZ
ange.sharp@gmail.com

What I have done since graduating. Previous to studying I had a background in administration in the finance sector. Completing the Bachelor of Therapeutic and Sports Massage was a stepping-stone in my personal growth and into the health system. I worked as a massage therapist for a couple of years then I decided to get back to my real passion of administration. I wish to continue on this path and become CEO of a hospital (a big dream I know).

What I gained from the BTSM. Personally, I gained everything from completing the degree. I clearly recall my first anatomy class... I did not even know what anatomy was! I left school at a young age and completing the degree taught me public speaking, essay writing, leadership, team work and the required skills during study. Although I am no longer practicing, one of the biggest advantages is the fact that I have the skill of Neuromuscular Therapy (squeezing the trapezius muscle) and receiving thanks for the relief.

Words of advice to BTSM students. Stick with it! Study can be daunting but is so worth it in the end. You become a better person, professionally and personally. I would not be where I am if I did not complete the degree. While you are studying, embrace all the experiences and build a client base so you can continue with massage when you finish studying. I was lucky enough to do this and was able to finish my degree and walk into my career. Most of all, enjoy what you are doing and follow your dreams!
Jessica King
Graduated: 2005
Current Age: 27
Current Occupation: Chief Financial Officer/Company Owner
Current Location: Perth, Western Australia

tasmansafety@bigpond.com

What I have done since graduating. A year after gaining my degree I moved to Perth. I started full time work in a sports and remedial massage clinic and after a few months I was offered a job with a gym (the owner also had the massage contract for the Western Force). I got to do pre-season work with The Force, which was a fantastic experience. I really enjoy working with all types of athletes so sports massage gives me the opportunity to do that. I would have to say one of my career highlights is working at the Busselton Ironman. I have had the opportunity to meet and work with some of the world's top triathletes. It's a fantastic experience and you get to meet people from all walks of life. I have had the best time being a massage therapist, getting to travel and meet a large variety of people and learning about different cultures. The best part of working in the sports massage industry is getting to make a difference to people's lives.

What I gained from the BTSM. Studying the BTSM gave me the opportunity to meet some great people. Completing the course gave me a qualification, which I could use not just in New Zealand but also overseas. I also learnt how to build and run a successful business.

Words of advice to BTSM students. Enjoy the time studying and learn as much as you can. Get as much hands on experience as you can while studying because it makes it a lot easier to walk into a great job once you finish studying.
Celebrating ten years of BTSM graduates

Helen Hammond
Name at graduation: Helen Wright
Graduated: 2006
Current Age: 37
Current Occupation: Massage Therapist
Current Location: Perth, Australia
h.m.wright@hotmail.com

What I have done since graduating. A career highlight for me certainly would be working with the New Zealand track cycling team before and after the Beijing Olympics, helping these elite athletes to achieve their goals, but equally as rewarding and satisfying would be helping many different people from all walks of life, young and old in my clinic in Invercargill over a period of nine years. My particular field of interest would be trigger point therapy because of its instant results helping to eliminate pain that a client may have been suffering with for years, which I have experienced with many of my long-term clients. Also scar tissue therapy and seeing the results of long-term treatment and reduction of scar tissue. I had a client that had suffered from neck pain and restricted movement for ten years before he came to see me. I worked with him for seven years and over this period we managed to reduce this lump to a minimal size, greatly increasing his range of movement much to his surprise and satisfaction.

What I gained from the BTSM. The greatest benefit gained from completing the BTSM programme for me would be the knowledge that I have the highest qualification available in the field of massage, which is a huge confidence booster, and it looks impressive on my CV. I also was on the committee which put together the Massage New Zealand conference, Broadening Your Stroke, in Invercargill in 2009. My BTSM experience helped - in my last year my class organized a symposium which included representatives from the massage community throughout New Zealand – this gave me an insight into how these sorts of events are brought together and enhanced my confidence in dealing with key note speakers, booking venues, trades exhibitors etc.

Words of advice to BTSM students. Gain as much experience as possible in your chosen techniques/field. Also talk and ask questions to as many people as possible. Your confidence and ability will only grow and increase with time. Gather a support network around you of trusted colleagues and honest friends to bounce ideas off and to receive constructive criticism and feedback from.
Celebrating ten years of BTSM graduates

Deborah Harris
Graduated: 2006
Current Age: 30
Current Occupation: Massage Therapist and Manager of City Massage Therapy within City Osteopaths Healthcare
Current Location: Central Wellington, NZ
deborah.h.harris@gmail.com

What I have done since graduating. I worked part time in a health store and part time in a massage clinic (chair massage focus during 2007). In 2008 I went to the UK and worked part-time in a small massage and multidisciplinary health clinic. In 2011, I moved to Wellington and found a position as a massage therapist in City Osteopaths, where I am still based. I have done a lot of extra study. I have attended small workshops run by MNZ and have been involved in organising a talk.

What I gained from the BTSM. I believe that the degree helped me to get the position I currently have. The owner, as well as clients, is impressed by a degree. Also I feel that acquaintances take my work more seriously when they hear that I have a degree. I am proud to have studied the first-degree programme in massage therapy in NZ. I think the emphasis placed on health psychology, communications and ethics in the BTSM was brilliant. The communication skills have helped in every area of my life. The placements, student clinics and practical learning in class was extensive and a good preparation for real work life.

Words of advice to BTSM students. Keep learning. Keep practicing. Keep up your ‘study’ meeting with fellow therapists. Stand up for yourself in terms of pay and a good healthy working environment. Value yourself. Join MNZ and if you want to see changes made on how MNZ is run change it from the inside as it is a small association and you will be heard. Remember that if you can help someone a little bit- deactivate one nasty trigger point, or respectfully listen to one story that your client has needed to get off their chest - then you have done a great job; you don’t need to fix everything at once. Put all your energy into helping your clients and doing a great job, and the money will follow. Also have a good business plan, be aware of what your costs will be and how much you need to bring in to pay all the bills and live comfortably, and then plan for that. Enjoy the journey.
Wendy Paterson
Graduated: 2006
Current Age: 46
Current Occupation: Massage Therapist
Current Location: Invercargill, NZ
wendy.keepintouch@gmail.com

What I have done since graduating. I became a self-employed massage therapist in my 3rd year of study. Working from within a busy Chiropractic clinic had huge advantages. I had help with client health issues, a referral system in place and a keen supporter of massage on my side. Over the past 7 years I have built up a busy business with a large client base from Invercargill, Winton and surrounds. I also work within Southland Hospital looking after staff. I do not specialise in one client group but am more focused on helping individuals regardless of their reasons for coming. On going study has been through MNZ conferences, Manual Lymph Drainage and Alexander Technique workshops. Recently I have started studying for my Diploma in Naturopathy. This is to enable me to have a more holistic approach for the benefit of the clients overall health while ensuring the longevity of my massage career.

What I gained from the BTSM. Personally I have grown in confidence and self-belief. Learning more about my own abilities and strengths as far as thinking academically and being able to put into practice what I have learned. The degree has given me the credibility with other health professionals as well as clients who feel they are in good knowledgeable hands. I think a massage degree has made other professionals re-evaluate massage as a credible remedial health modality.

Words of advice to BTSM students. I would advise networking with other health professionals as soon as they are confident. This could be the support network as they exit from the STI umbrella. Also ask lots of questions, as most people are happy to help. Take on board all self-care techniques learned, as a massage career can be short lived if you do not look after yourselves.

Alana
Graduated: 2007
Current Age: 26
Current Occupation: Youth Care Worker & Massage Therapist
Current Location: Invercargill, NZ

What I have done since graduating. Since graduating I have gained experience in clinical, hospital, sports and events settings. Working with local and national athletes helped inspire me to complete a Bachelor of Sport and Recreation with an interest in sports medicine and injury rehabilitation. In 2010 I helped start MUSCLE FIX Massage Therapy for Health & Performance, with two other BTSM graduates. I work as a therapist part time at MUSCLE FIX and continue to work with sports teams in Invercargill. I also work part time as a programmes coordinator for ‘At Risk’ and ‘Behavioral Challenged’ youth in Invercargill and Dunedin.

What I gained from the BTSM. I gained basic knowledge, confidence and competence to become a successful massage therapist.

Words of advice to BTSM students. Get as much clinical practice as you can.
Julian West
Graduated: 2007
Current Occupation: Part Time Massage Therapist
Current Location: Bluff, NZ

What I have done since graduating. Once I graduated I renovated the massage room, bought a table and a computer. I proceeded to do massage following my graduation from home. Being a father of two teenage boys has drawn on my resources at times and had an indirect effect on my massage. The years have followed with me gaining experience by doing several hundred massages. The experience has given me a fluidity and sleekness to massage and an increased ability to recognise posture and other health details from the client, which all help to now form a better assessment. I intend to market a bit more aggressively this year as my confidence is growing. Clients returning and telling me of their improvement has helped my confidence and motivates me even further.

What I gained from the BTSM. What I gained personally is confidence and belief in what I am doing. The ethics and massage protocols have a sound basis and are good for my protection and that of my clients. Also the subjects taught helped give me a good understanding of the human body and its anatomy and its direct relationship to massage.

Words of advice to BTSM students. Believe in yourself and concentrate on marketing yourself. Get all your resources ready. Most of all recognize that massage can have a powerful benefit for those who suffer from an injury. The ball is in your park – use this healing tool with the best skill you can muster. Your skills, your advice and your exercise rehabilitation strategies will influence

Hayley Glass
Graduated: 2007
Current Age: 32
Current Occupation: Merchandiser
Current Location: Invercargill, NZ
hmglass@hotmail.com

What I have done since graduating. I became a mother 3 months after graduating, did some casual tutoring at SIT, massaged a team for Tour of Southland (2008), and had some regular clients from home but it was never full time work with a little one running around. Eight months after my second baby I got work in Franz Josef as a full time massage therapist in a hot pool. I gained some global sensitivities working there as we catered to all kinds of cultures and people and of course the information from their massage experiences elsewhere on the planet. I gained vacuum cup and hot stone skills whilst there too which has really taken root and I would like to develop that further (cups especially). When we moved back to Invercargill a room attached to the house became my “clinic” but I have been busy in other life activities and aim to have more focus on it this year. I worked at an event in March this year and just loved being part of a team for those 3 days and making good cash is always a highlight!

What I gained from the BTSM. Personally knowledge about bodies is always fascinating and being able to apply that to your own (or family etc.) gives me real peace of mind. I like knowing when I should take the kids to advanced help if necessary. Professionally there are expectations on being awesome because you are meant to know this stuff all the time because you studied it for three years!! And well, I’m still using my textbooks regularly and there is always more learning to do.

Words of advice to BTSM students. Bodies! Massage as many different ones as you can! Really get into pathology and symptoms of conditions. Learn to be adaptable if you aren’t already. Love what you do, because most clients will recognise it.
Julia McDonald
Name at graduation: Julia Thielmann
Graduated: 2008
Current Age: 29
Current Occupation: Housewife/mother
Current Location: Central Southland, NZ

What I have done since graduating. I got married, massaged on a casual basis, did some waitress, helped on the farm and had a couple of kids. I was pregnant with my second child when I helped teach some relaxation massage. I loved it but preferred spending the time at home with my children.

What I gained from the BTSM. I think I have learned a lot about myself. Studying massage brought out the best and the worst in me. I loved the course and had a great class, and couldn’t have asked for better tutors. However, I was very immature when I started and hated all the assignments and paperwork. But I absolutely loved the hands-on part and placements, and found it exciting to be able to put into practice what we have been learning in class. I loved all the positive outcomes and the delight on the clients’ faces after the massage. I struggled with exams, mainly because I wasn’t as prepared as I possibly could have been but also because they freak me out! But I learned that I am smarter than I thought so I guess I have gained some self respect 😊. Looking back now I love the experience and think I have grown up a lot during that time. I learned a bit about perseverance and the fact that my limits are way higher than I used to think.

Words of advice to BTSM students. It’s all about your attitude. Stay positive and proactive. Ask for help and work with your classmates.

Zane Harris
Graduated: 2008
Current Age: 40yrs
Current Occupation: Massage Therapist
Current Location: World Health & Fitness, Invercargill, NZ
zdharis@gmail.com

What I have done since graduating. I opened my own business as a sole operator of Sportz Plus Massage 2007 and became accredited to NZAS (NZ Academy of Sport), now known as HPSENZ (High Performance Sport NZ). I have attended national and international sporting events travelling with Swimming Southland to 13 national swim meets from 2006-2013, 4 National Track cycling Championships and 2 Overseas Trips with Swimming NZ 2010 (Pan Pacific USA, and 2011 World Fina Champs, China). I have developed professional relationships with local sports teams such as the Southland Stags, Cross-Fit Wild south, Netball Southland Academy, Athletic Southland, Southland Academy of Sports, Triathlon Southland, Badminton Southland, and World Health and Fitness Gym. I am also part of MNZ (Massage New Zealand) and attended 4 MNZ Conferences between 2008 - 2013. The most satisfying aspect of being a massage therapist is working with people and making a difference to their quality of life, helping them to return to sport and the activities that they want to pursue, and being part of their journey in some small way.

Words of advice to BTSM students. You learn best by doing. Be part of the community.
Alexandra Curd
Graduated: 2008
Current Age: 25
Current Occupation: Remedial Massage Therapist / Clinic Manager
Current Location: Perth, Western Australia
Aly.curd@gmail.com

What I have done since graduating. Since graduation I have become the clinic manager as well as senior massage therapist for a busy little clinic in Perth, Western Australia. I currently manage six other massage therapists as well as work with clients myself. I have undertaken postgraduate training in naturopathy, dry needling, Pilates, oncology massages and in 2011 I went to China with Massage Australia to learn Tuina massage in TCM hospital in Beijing. I have met many amazing people in the industry and have learnt a lot, something I hope to continue in the future.

What I gained from the BTSM. The education quality you receive from the BTSM is second to none. I know this personally from managing a clinic and trying to find knowledgeable and competent therapists to employ. Therapists I have employed who have participated in the BTSM programme certainly stand out from diploma or TAFE students.

Words of advice to BTSM students. Don’t think anything you learn is irrelevant as you never know when these skills will come in handy. Practice on as many bodies as possible.

Derek Tan
Graduated: 2008
Current Age: 40
Current Occupation: Co-owner / massage therapist
Current Location: Invercargill, NZ
Derek.n.tan@gmail.com

What I have done since graduating. After graduating I worked as a bread merchant and during this time I was employed as a massage therapist part time in an Invercargill massage clinic where I worked for about a year and a half. It was a good experience and I learnt a lot. I worked on elite netball players and after a year and a half I felt ready to go out on my own. In November of 2010 I and two other graduates set up MUSCLE FIX. My two business partners are also degree graduates from SIT, so we knew each other from school although graduating from different years. Highlights for me are: being my own boss and working on the NZ track cycling team.

What I gained from the BTSM. It has given me a career in which I can care and help others with their health and well-being. It gave me the skills and knowledge to be a competent massage therapist. In this line of work professionalism, ethics and boundaries are critical! The clinical reasoning and knowledge of the body allows me to decipher the problem and determine an effective treatment that gets to the root of the issue.

Words of advice to BTSM students. Practice your hands on skills. Learn to massage over clothes too, and develop greater palpation skills for situations and clients that it’s not practical to massage directly on the skin. Palpate and treat specific areas with fine accurate pressure. Accuracy and precision are the hallmarks of a good treatment. Attention to detail is a must, do not just skim the surface.
Clare Carey
Graduated: 2009
Current Age: 25
Current Occupation: Massage Therapist
Current Location: Canberra, Australia
clare.carey7@gmail.com

What I have done since graduating. After returning to Australia, I recommenced work at two different clinics, one for 5 days a week, the other 1-day a week. I did that up until January 2013, after picking up some work with the Canberra Raiders and a company called Julia Russell Massage (services athletes Australia wide) working mostly with the A.C.T Brumbies. In 2012 I started CrossFit, which is now a booming sport worldwide.

What I gained from the BTSM. Personally, I gained contacts in NZ for networking and also formed some good friendships. Professionally I gained a new set of skills and a different approach to treating my patients.

Words of advice to BTSM students. If you are looking for work with high profile sporting teams, I would recommend putting yourself out there and networking with others. I have found getting work with sports teams isn’t so much about how good you are but who you know. Once you are there, they can then decide if they like your therapeutic skills and approach. Network with gyms and dieticians, and involve yourself with popular activities that will require soft tissue treatment to assist their performance.

Susan Cochran
Graduated: 2009
Current Age: 35
Current Occupation: Massage Therapist / Tourism Consultant
Current Location: Invercargill, NZ
susan@venturesouthland.co.nz

What I have done since graduating. About 1 year after graduation, 2 other BTSM graduates and I opened up our own Massage Clinic, MUSCLE FIX in Invercargill. We operate as a company, and basically split running costs between us, which makes financing a business more realistic. We have been in operation for about 2½ years now, and my client base is building all the time. I also work fulltime in a role not related to massage. I work part time at our Clinic. I have a wide range of clients, from teenage athletes, to builders, to older people feeling more aches and pains. I couldn’t tell you the last time I did a relaxation massage; it seems to be only sports, remedial and recovery massages that I do, but this does mean that I get to see results. I also organise massage at the Goldrush Multisport event, which is a 3 day event in Central Otago. Year after year we receive wonderful feedback and gratitude from the athletes.

What I gained from the BTSM. A full and thorough understanding of the science and principles of soft tissue therapies. The confidence to be able to go out to assess and treat people from all walks of life. I have personally become more body aware, and able to give and receive nurturing touch.

Words of advice to BTSM students. Be prepared for hard work and little financial gain! Support each other, especially after graduating. Practice, practice, practice, in as many different settings as possible, with as many different client types.
Melody Dickinson
Graduated: 2009
Current Age: 24
Current Occupation: Sports and Remedial Massage Therapist
Current Location: London, UK
melodydickinson@hotmail.com

What I have done since graduating. Since graduating I have worked briefly in massage in New Zealand before moving to Perth in Australia. I worked in a fantastic Sports and Remedial clinic for 2 years in Perth. From there I have moved to London and have been working in another Sports and Deep Tissue clinic here for the past 4 months. I have done quite a few courses since including dry needling and Rocktaping. I have had a complete range of clients in these clinics of all ages.

What I gained from the BTSM. I have found having done the degree it has always been extremely easy to find work. Our qualifications and skills are a lot higher than others from what I have learnt and seen since. The information and skills learnt are also fantastic in day to day life, for example, knowing so much more about your own body.

Words of advice to BTSM students. It’s all worth it. Stick out the Degree - don’t leave with the Diploma, as it puts you well above others in the industry.

Karolyn Wilson
Graduated: 2009
Current Age: 27
Current Occupation: Part time Massage Therapist, Part time student
Current Location: Oamaru, NZ

What I have done since graduating. I started directly with the massage business that I am currently working for. After being at the business for six months (approx.), I was given more responsibilities, including closing the clinic. I am now a partner in the business, and have in the past been acting manager during periods where the owner has been away. I love the variety that comes with being a massage therapist, and because of the flexibility within my workplace, I am able to do things outside the business that I am passionate about, including working with a local youth group. This year, I have also started studying again through distance learning towards a Bachelor of Theology.

What I gained from the BTSM. I think the biggest thing that I learnt during my time in Invercargill was the leadership potential I have. This has helped me both in the workplace, as I am able to be an important part of the team, as well as in my personal life. I grew in confidence during my time at SIT and learnt that I can achieve a lot when I put my mind to it.

Words of advice to BTSM students. When it comes to going out into the work force, don’t be afraid if things don’t start out well. Stick with it and, in time, you will find that you generate a loyal clientele. When I first started, I would be lucky if I had more than five massages a week, but now I have a great bunch of clients who hesitate to see another therapist. And don’t compare yourselves to other therapists - trust your own skills and just be yourself.
Tracey Senior
Graduated: 2010
Current Occupation: Massage Therapist/Owner Operator
Current Location: Invercargill, NZ
traceyhohl@gmail.com

What I have done since graduating. Coming into my third year of business, I am an advocate in promoting the wonderful benefits of massage and also communicating with other therapists. I believe that as a therapist I need to be constantly learning, which I accomplish by attending courses. My highlights include being chosen to become a High Performance Sport NZ (HPSNZ) provider, and also the opportunity to massage the Silver Ferns in September 2013.

What I gained from the BTSM. I believe that by gaining my BTSM, I am looked upon with the same respect as any professional with a degree. I have referrals from physiotherapists, and chiropractors to name a few. Also the scope to continue learning is huge because of the ability to cross credit. I feel as time goes on the demand for massage therapists with a degree will increase year by year with public education increasing. By keeping our assessments and treatments to a high standard we can achieve great results and personal satisfaction.

Words of advice to BTSM students. Be genuine and honest and love what you are doing and take care of yourself. Try and be an advocate and promote massage. Be very particular in maintaining good body mechanics and staying physically fit and working with your core. Keep positive - it takes time!!

Barbrin Bormann
Graduated: 2010
Current Age: 46
Current Occupation: Massage therapist
Current Location: Arrowtown, NZ
Barbrin@hotmail.com

What I have done since graduating. I've been working at Millbrook Golf Resort as a massage therapist for nearly 2 years after I graduated and am now self-employed, working from home. I was lucky to experience international clientele with lots of massage experience which allowed me to compare 'our' (SIT) education, with the education of other therapists, experienced by the clients. It felt a solid achievement to have accomplished the degree. I could compare my 'research findings' about 'massage awareness' with international clients: relaxation and whole body massage and athletes and therapeautics stood out – and the physiological knowledge was limited. I'm now working with a lot of Golfers as private clients. Seeing the improvements by working over an extended period is inspiring as one can see the change in the tissues and in the posture of the clients. Home stretches/exercises are most important to ensure lasting effects. It's an exciting time to be in the massage industry with all the new fascial research. Trying to help/ helping people is extremely rewarding and I try not to forget all that I have learned by continuously revising on anatomy, participating in workshops and reading ongoing research.

What I gained from the BTSM. It felt fantastic to study about our body. Learning and reading research has shaped my thinking. A place in life – a solid foundation for more to come. The ability to work with athletes (or others) on a professional level.

Words of advice to BTSM students. Try to get as much hands-on experience as possible. Anatomy and Physiology is the base - Origins, Insertions, Actions!! Continue education of different techniques – and different approaches.
Nicki Jury  
Graduated: 2010  
Current Age: 55  
Current Occupation: Massage Therapist/ Health Centre Manager  
Current Location: Nelson, NZ  
nickijury8@gmail.com

What I have done since graduating. My first year after graduating was difficult and several times I was tempted to throw it in and do something that would give me a regular income. The building up of a clientele was easier said than done; Nelson seemed to have so many therapists already with much more experience than me. The first year after graduation was hell financially. The first job I got was through a beauty clinic, which wasn’t my ideal, but at least I had access to some “bodies.” Meanwhile I was sending out my CV to everyone and doing a lot of door knocking at the numerous gyms, attending interviews and giving lots of free massages. One of the places eventually replied and that was Kimi Ora Spa Resort in Kaiteriteri. The subsequent job interview revealed that they wanted a Manager as well as a massage therapist. That was a shock when they asked when I could start! I have been there for 2 ½ years now and it’s been another steep learning curve in regards to running a Health Spa as well. Then 18 months later I applied for another job at a gym in town and got that too. I find that it’s great because I work with such a variety of people now. The gym has a lot of multi-sport athletes so it’s challenging in a different way to the work at the spa. I get to use the skills that I learned whilst studying. It’s been a roller coaster ride but I wouldn’t change it for anything!

What I gained from the BTSM. When I first decided I wanted to do the degree course I wasn’t sure I could do it. I had never done any serious study before and lacked confidence in my ability. Completing the degree was the most difficult thing I’ve ever done but afterwards I felt much more confident in every aspect of my life.

Words of advice to BTSM students. Learn your origins, insertions and actions!!!! AND KEEP SMILING!

Alex Rose  
Graduated: 2011  
Current Age: 24  
Current Occupation: Massage Therapist / Operational Manager  
Current Location: Yass/ Canberra, NSW, Australia  
alex.rose@live.com.au

What I have done since graduating. I’m working as a massage therapist at a clinic in Canberra and have become the operational manager at a golf club. I have also been a voluntary missionary in Ghana for 3+ months. I like seeing clients come in with a ‘condition’ and being about to treat them for a while and see improvements. I still have a dream of working for a soccer club in Europe; however, my path hasn’t made it there yet.

What I gained from the BTSM. I personally have the feeling I achieved something as I got a degree in an area of study that interests me and I like. Being able to use my studies to gain a job in that area is also a plus.

Words of advice to BTSM students. Don’t give up, going the whole way (to BTSM) is longer and harder; the reason is because you learn more and expand your skill more, and gain a higher qualification.
Georgette Yanouzas
Graduated: 2011
Current Age: 54
Current Occupation: Massage Therapist
Current Location: Kimiora Spa Resort, Kaiteriteri, NZ
gyzgirl@yahoo.com

What I have done since graduating. I have been working at a spa that is part of a wellness resort called Kimi Ora. This suits me well because it gives me an opportunity to use Swedish massage, pregnancy massage techniques, sports massage, and remedial massage. People come to the spa for relaxation as well as therapeutic treatment. Our BTSM qualification has us well prepared to work with a variety of conditions and situations and that allows me to work on many clients that might not ordinarily come to a spa for something other than relaxation. Working in a wellness resort setting has also allowed me to take my holistic therapy to a more serious level. Professional development has been vital to me in several ways. I am still reading journal articles, accessing DVD’s, and I have also attended a workshop by an American Indian physician/massage therapist.

What I gained from the BTSM. Our knowledge of physiology gained during our degree has really helped me personally and professionally. By understanding human physiology, I can now read books written by scientists, physicians and nutritionists and discern for myself the merits of their findings. Knowledge I gained in psychology during our education has helped me immensely in understanding the very prevalent condition of stress in our society these days. Knowing the physiology and psychological aspects of stress has implications in treatment plans for clients and aftercare advice. I feel strongly that as a health professional, I need to learn about living a life full of well-being so I can be a good example to others who witness what health means to me. I want to walk the talk.

Words of advice to BTSM students. Make use of resources offered at school. Read research articles in databases. View DVDs. Exchange massages with as many classmates as possible and be experimental in clinics where you have a chance to work on clients who may be more open-minded. After you immediately graduate: get your “hands on” as many people as possible (immerse yourself in massage). Pick something and become super great at it (i.e.: lower back, neck, pregnancy massage). Stay in contact with your classmates.

Shaye McNaughton
Graduated: 2011
Current Age: 22
Current Occupation: Massage Therapist
Current Location: Winton, NZ
themuscleworkshop@gmail.com

What I have done since graduating. Since graduating in 2011 I have begun my own massage business “The muscle workshop” focusing on therapeutic and sports massage. A yearly highlight since completing the BTSM is working with the Tour of Southland teams. I have also been lucky to work with many other sporting people from netball players, cycling, shearing, rugby etc. Although it is great to work alongside athletes it is also important to me to look after the rest of my clients which include farmers, builders and office people etc. The most satisfying aspect of massage therapy is getting clients back to full function and helping them achieve their goals or enjoying a little relaxation.

What I gained from the BTSM. I gained a lot from the BTSM course, to name a few things – confidence, communication, knowledge of the body and its function. Overall the BTSM course provided me with the right education and confidence to go out into the world and begin my own massage business.

Words of advice to BTSM students. Client communication is vital. Knowing your anatomy is vital, but what’s more important is keeping good notes that you can look back on because you won’t retain everything you’re taught over three years.
Cushlia Young
Graduated: 2012
Current Age: 24
Current Occupation: Live in Carer
Current Location: United Kingdom

What I have done since graduating. I have worked as a Massage Therapist when I graduated from the course. I thoroughly enjoyed my time working as a massage therapist; it is a very rewarding job to do, and I do plan to return to this profession. My interests in massage therapy are predominately in Lymphatic Drainage, Nerve Mobilization, and in Sports Massage, however all other massage techniques are of interest also. I eventually aspire to own my own business and be successful in the process. The most rewarding part of the job for me would be being successful in treating the client and leave them walking out feeling as though we have achieved something or resolved the problem.

What I gained from the BTSM. I have gained an expanded knowledge in the health care sector. Professionally this has opened doors and given me an avenue in which I can continue my learning and progress in the time after my BTSM degree.

Words of advice to BTSM students. Continuation of your study once you have left the education system is very important. And also to keep up your physical strength, and take some time out for yourself as Massage as a full time job can be very demanding and very draining mentally, physically and emotionally.

Emma Barnett
Name at graduation: Emma Crosswell
Graduated: 2012
Current Age: 21
Current Location: Blenheim, NZ

What I have done since graduating. After graduating in December it was a rather busy time regarding wedding planning and visits to Blenheim so I was unable to have commitments to any particular job. However after returning from the wedding and honeymoon back to Invercargill I got a position as a massage therapist with a local clinic. I have since relocated to Blenheim for my partner’s job and I am hoping to get back into the field. I’d like to help people of all ages and abilities and in different walks of life (infants, pregnancy, sporting, rehab, illness) and see them function at their full potential and living life to the fullest.

What I gained from the BTSM. Personally I feel I have gained a lot including greater confidence in myself and have built on my interpersonal skills, and feel I am a better communicator as a result. I feel this came from massage and involvement with peers and clients of all ages. I have also gained a broad range of knowledge such as anatomy and health aspects, which has proved beneficial in helping others as well as my own personal training and exercise.

Words of advice to BTSM students. Apart from learning and studying anatomy until the cows come home as everyone I gather would suggest, I would say give everything 100% in effort but also read the extra readings given to widen your knowledge. I would also suggest to try to have an interest in everything as it makes it easier to learn, even if there’s not a natural passion for it. Make it interesting by relating it to something that is relevant to you. Lastly I would say, try getting involved in a range of activities and exploring different age groups to gain experience in different areas.
Niska Tapp-Young
Graduated: 2012
Current Age: 22
Current Occupation: Sports center general assistant
Current Location: Blenheim, NZ
niskatappyoung@hotmail.co.nz

What I have done since graduating. Since I have graduated I have mainly been doing non-massage related casual work within Blenheim. In February I got a full time casual job at a local winery in Marlborough as a cellar door hand and logistics coordinator. I also practice massage therapy part time. I have set up a room from home and do the odd massage weekly but have not yet advertised. Three times a week I massage a local Premier rugby team which keeps me very busy but is a lot of fun. Every Saturday I apply massage therapy for the rugby team before and after the game as well as the first aid during the game. I have really enjoyed this as I have a passion for rugby and also massage therapy. I enjoy the challenge as it is very physical and I get to work with a lot of sport related injuries so the experience is great. I am definitely going to advertise my business to build a bigger clientele and see where things go from there. I believe the most satisfying aspect of being a massage therapist is seeing an improvement in a client from the massage treatments they have been receiving.

What I gained from the BTSM. Personally I have gained more confidence in myself as a person and a massage therapist. I have been able to gain a wide range of knowledge related to massage therapy, the body and cultural awareness. The experience from the physical and theory aspects of the degree has been very helpful to become a qualified massage therapist. I think professionally I now have a lot of knowledge and understanding towards what it takes to be professional while working in a massage therapy environment.

Words of advice to BTSM students. Work hard because at the end of the three years you do realise it was all worthwhile. Don’t be afraid to ask for help when you’re not sure. Get as much hands on experience as you can while studying the BTSM, every client’s body is different and it is good to understand and learn that from your own experience. If you don’t get a massage therapy job straight after you have graduated it is always something you can do part time until you do find the right job. Learn to look after your own body – SELFCARE - it will pay off.

Taryn Shine
Graduated: 2012
Current Age: 33
Current Occupation: Kitchen worker
Current Location: Invercargill

What I have done since graduating. Unfortunately a wrist injury has meant that I cannot perform massage except for relaxation pressure, of which I have done about 5 in total since I am graduating. I hope to recover fully and then be able to plan my future in the industry. I am disappointed at the jobs/ prospects in New Zealand, particularly remuneration, and therefore my main goal is to be able to work for myself probably from a home based room. I can’t wait to get my hands on clients when my situation improves.

What I gained from the BTSM. A massive knowledge! All the skills I have learnt blew me away. Communication was huge, as I had to learn to get what was in my brain out in a way others could understand. It has also opened up a whole world of possibilities for me and what it is possible to achieve when I didn’t think it was possible at all. I rate highly the positive changes in myself.

Words of advice to BTSM students. Aside from KNOW YOUR ANATOMY! Work hard, don’t slack, it will be rewarding in the end. Trust your tutors, they will see you right. Do as much extra stuff as you can. I didn’t and I regret it.
Letitia Kelly
Graduated: 2012
Current Age: 21
Current Occupation: Laboratory technician
Current Location: Invercargill, NZ
Kelly-letitia@hotmail.com

What I have done since graduating. I have been taking a break from massage therapy - a bit of a brain overload @ the end. I have been working and I am hoping to travel and gain a job overseas within treatment and sports massage. One day I would love to have my own therapeutic massage practice. While studying I enjoyed learning new skills and being able to see how massage therapy can help people. The most rewarding part was graduating, but also my time working in a community clinic. It’s so good to be able to give back.

What I gained from the BTSM. I have personally gained a sense of accomplishment being able to complete a degree. I was just a person when I began studying but now I can see and understand the importance of professionalism and what it means to be the professional that I now am. I can now see things in a different light.

Words of advice to BTSM students. Try your best and if you are having trouble or do not understand ask for help. Keep up to date with work and give yourself plenty of time to complete tasks/ assignments and ensure you understand them fully. Most importantly have a good time and enjoy learning experience.

Leah Parkes
Graduated: 2012
Current Age: 35
Current Occupation: Massage Therapist and Support worker
Current Location: Invercargill, NZ
leahparkes@hotmail.com

What I have done since graduating. I am now in my second season with a rugby club where I provide them with massage pre and post game, strapping and sideline first aid. This has given me fantastic exposure to many different injuries and has allowed me to put into practice the knowledge that was taught to me during my studies at SIT. I have recently started working in a local clinic, which subjects me to further exposure to a wide range of clientele and fortunately for me, some guidance from an experienced therapist. I feel I have only taken the first two steps into my journey as a massage therapist and I look forward to the adventures to come.

What I gained from the BTSM. Gaining this degree has given me a great sense of self-confidence and self worth within the massage industry.

Words of advice to BTSM students. Get out there and get as much hands on as you can. Make yourself known and expose yourself to as many people as you can, both neighboring professionals and potential clientele.
Chelsie Dimmock
Graduating: December 2013
Current Location: Queenstown, NZ
Chella_bella@hotmail.com

What I have done and / or plan to do after graduating. I love being a massage therapist because every day presents different cases which keep it interesting and challenging. I also have had the privilege to work in many different settings from clinic rooms to sports events. What I find most satisfying about my job is that I can help clients along the path of injury rehabilitation or just simply feeling great from having a massage. I look forward to my future career as a massage therapist as I am excited to accomplish my goals of travelling the world with my career, working alongside sports teams and owning my own business.

What I have gained from the BTSM. I have grown as a massage therapist both professionally and personally. I have gained a great knowledge base of anatomy and physiology. I have developed a vast amount of hands on skills and have had the experience of working with an array of clientele such as professional sports teams, different events and individual, seeing my goals towards my future career being achieved. I have met some fantastic people and I have made some amazing friends through the BTSM.

Words of advice to BTSM students. Study your anatomy. Make time for self-care, rest and have fun! You get as much out of it as what you put into it. Enjoy!!

Bailey McCulloch
Graduating: December 2013
Current Age: 21
Current Occupation: Massage Therapist
Current Location: Invercargill, NZ

What I have done and / or plan to do after graduating. While completing the BTSM I have opened my own business, called Musclemechanix. I have a therapeutic and sports focus. I have also been involved with many athletes and teams around Southland including club football teams, rowers, rugby players, netball players, cyclists and Southland representative teams and athletes. I have traveled with teams to tournaments and worked alongside coaching staff. I have also had opportunities to work with national level teams and athletes. Some of my highlights have been working with the All Blacks, the Highlanders and at the NZ sevens. For me the most satisfying part of being a massage therapist is educating the clients and seeing people get back into what they love doing, with more confidence and a better understanding of injuries. It’s really cool to see a client go back out there with the attitude and skills to maintain the work that’s been done. I aspire to become a massage tutor and I am also looking to complete a postgraduate study next year so I can develop my skills and knowledge as a therapist.

What I gained from the BTSM. I have gained knowledge of physiology, anatomy and clinical assessment, which are all very important parts of my work. I have also gained skills that benefit other aspects of my life. I have grown in confidence, developed my ability to self reflect, and developed everyday skills like organisation.

Words of advice to BTSM students. Be confident get out there and practice right from the beginning; take the opportunities that are offered to you even if they’re unpaid. You have to start somewhere and those opportunities are an awesome chance to develop your skills. Make sure you take time out of study for you. There is so much to learn and it’s an awesome journey but if you don’t take time out for yourself, you may lose the enjoyment.
Catherine Cunliffe  
Graduating: December 2013  
Current Occupation: Soft tissue therapist, Owner, Director  
Current Location: Tauranga and Invercargill, NZ  
cc.bodytherapy@gmail.com  

What I have done and / or plan to do after graduating. I have worked in a four and a half star hotel spa as a senior massage therapist as well as owning and operating my own clinic. I have seen many happy clients, both national and international, involving different backgrounds, languages and cultures. However one thing is for sure, the clients enjoyed great massage as a result of my learning from the BTSM.

What I gained from the BTSM. The BTSM gave me an opportunity to combine Eastern and Western massage theory and techniques. Utilising both styles of massage gives more benefits for my clients.

Words of advice to BTSM students. Study as hard as you can and take every opportunity to practice what you learn.

Bernie Hewitson  
Graduating: December 2013  
Current Age: 47  
Current Occupation: Self employed Farmer, Massage Therapist  
Current Location: Waimumu, Southland, NZ  
bernie.hewitson@hotmail.com  

What I have done and / or plan to do after graduating. I have a small business that I run out of a day spa in my area, and I also have some private clients who I work with from my home.

What I gained from the BTSM. It has given me a feeling of self worth and empowerment. The knowledge has been amazing and I know I have a greater understanding of the human body. It has also given me a passion for knowledge and understanding of injuries and illness.

Words of advice to BTSM students. Work on your anatomy and pathology. Don’t be afraid to start your business. Most of your greater learning will be gained through your clients and case studies.
Emma Brown
Graduating: December 2013
Current Age: 20
Current Occupation: Student
Current Location: Invercargill, NZ
ejbrown17@hotmail.co.nz

What I have done and / or plan to do after graduating. I have started to build up a small client base that I massage from my home-based clinic. I am also currently massaging a rugby team based out of Invercargill.

What I gained from the BTSM. I have gained a broader understanding of what massage is, how it can be implemented and what it means, to me, to be a massage therapist. Also, I have realised how important it is, for me, to keep building onto my own knowledge base. I have also gained a lot more confidence, personally and professionally, compared to when I first started this course.

Words of advice to BTSM students. Time management and knowing your anatomy is very important.

Chloe Jackson
Graduating: December 2013
Current Age: 35
Current Occupation: Massage therapist
Current Location: Invercargill, NZ
chloej@vodafone.co.nz

What I have done and / or plan to do after graduating. I have been working in my own business for the last 2 years based at two locations; a physiotherapy practice in Invercargill and at a gym in Gore where I go one day per week. My business continues to grow, primarily through word of mouth, which in itself is very satisfying. I love meeting new people all the time and working with them to come up with a tailored treatment to help work towards their goals. I have also gained a lot of satisfaction from the increased awareness of myself that I have found as a result of being involved with massage.

What I have gained from the BTSM. I have proved a lot to myself through the process, and I have also gained a lot of knowledge - both on the industry and myself. I believe I am a stronger person through having to face the challenges presented by undertaking this education in conjunction with running a business and raising 2 young children, and I feel this serves to make me better at my job. I can rest assured that I am able to provide a well-rounded, professional service to my clients thanks to the education I have received - for me it has covered all bases.

Words of advice to BTSM students. Persist and don’t ever give up. Practice hands-on as much as possible; experience really does show through to your clients. Keep extending your learning all the time, don’t settle for doing the bare minimum, it won’t get you where you want to be. ENJOY!!
Braydon Symon
Graduating: December 2013
Current Age: 28
Current Occupation: Massage Therapist, Founder of Precision Massage Therapy
Current Location: Invercargill, NZ
Precisionmassagetherapy92@gmail.com

What I have done and / or plan to do after graduating. Prior to enrolling in the BTSM I completed a certificate in relaxation massage therapy. While studying the BTSM, I have worked with multiple sports teams and individuals from social to representative levels and people from all walks of life with various injuries and illnesses. My business, Precision Massage Therapy was developed in 2013 and targets the workplace and those people working with musculoskeletal pain and also sports individuals, teams and events. I enjoy helping people improve their health and wellbeing and share advice with them during treatment. The most satisfying aspect of massage therapy is helping relieve individual’s pain. In the future I plan to continue the growth of my business and the therapeutic massage industry as a collective, unified health modality. I also hope to complete further study in other areas of the health sector. I hope in the future I can employ other therapists.

What I have gained from the BTSM. I have gained a huge amount, physically, mentally, psychologically and academically from the BTSM. My knowledge of the human body can be applied in both the clinical setting and everyday life. I have developed a way to convey my thoughts in academic writing, express my thoughts verbally with a greater sense of vocabulary, manage time and work in conjunction with other people. Most importantly I have developed a confidence in myself that I never would have had if I did not complete the BTSM. I left school at a young age and worked as a labourer for nearly a decade. Completing this study is one of the greatest achievements of my life along with starting my own young family. To share completing this degree with two children under the age of five and a very supportive partner is an achievement I am very proud of.

Words of advice to BTSM students. Focus on the next assignment or exam, do not worry about things too far down the track, it will all come together at the end. Revise the work you have done. Read up on related topics that could help better your understanding. Learn your anatomy, listen to and communicate with your tutors, they will help as much as they can. Enjoy it!!

Angela Roy
Graduating: December 2013
Current Age: 24
Current Occupation: Student
Current Location: Invercargill, NZ
angie.roy82@yahoo.co.nz

What I have done and / or plan to do after graduating. I am currently massaging part-time while studying the BTSM. I am also massaging Crossfit athletes, Sharks basketballers and some pre season Stags rugby players.

What I have gained from the BTSM. I have gained an understanding of how muscles work and the importance of good posture, exercise and nutrition.

Words of advice to BTSM students. Get involved and always keep learning.
Liz de Groot
Graduating: December 2013
Current Age: 46
Current Occupation: Massage Therapist, CEO of D and M deGroot Ltd
Current Location: Invercargill, NZ
lizdegroot1@gmail.com

What I have done and / or plan to do after graduating. I own and operate my own massage clinic – Therapeutic Massage by Liz deGroot in Invercargill, New Zealand. I enjoy educating people about massage both in my clinic and in a Relaxation and Sport Massage course I teach at SIT in Gore. My plans for the future are to take a manual lymphatic drainage course in June 2014 in Tauranga by an internationally recognised instructor and to continue to learn about nerves as both these areas are of great interest to me.

What I have gained from the BTSM. I have gained a better knowledge of myself and my abilities including massage therapy and its role in health and wellbeing. I have learned to step out of my comfort zone with greater confidence. I have developed better reflection, self-care, time management and organisational skills since taking the BTSM. I am learning not to compare myself to others, to accept my own abilities and effort, to love who I am and know I have the power in me to design who I wish to become.

Words of advice to BTSM students. Remember this is something you chose and remember why. Reflect on your progress; even make a chart of your learning or keep a journal, it might come in handy at the end. Find someone to share your exciting moments with and your deep despair. Practice! Practice! Practice! Visualise how this journey is enhancing your life and imagine how it will feel to reach the end. Refill yourself with energy, happiness and love. “Knowledge is a treasure but practice is the key to it.” – Thomas Fuller

Anita Flannery
Graduating: December 2013
Current Age: 30
Current Occupation: Massage Therapist, Musician
Current Location: Invercargill, NZ
anita.flannery@hotmail.co.nz

What I have done and / or plan to do after graduating. I am currently providing mobile chair massage out in the community and plan to provide this in workplaces in the Southland area. I also plan to offer this service at shows and events around Invercargill.

What I have gained from the BTSM. I have personally grown in confidence while completing the BTSM. The BTSM has given me some really great skills and knowledge about the body and around performing massage techniques.

Words of advice to BTSM students. Know your anatomy! Study hard, as much as you can and put it into practice.
Katie Oliver
Graduating: December 2013
Current Age: 33
Current Occupation: Student/ part time massage therapist
Current Location: Invercargill, NZ
Katie3079@yahoo.co.nz

What I have done and / or plan to do after graduating. I look forward to graduating at the end of this year. My short-term goals would be to continue to work as a massage therapist in Invercargill to gain experience. In the future I would love work towards working in or setting up a work environment that has a wide range of practitioners available in the same building such as other manual therapists, alternative medicine practitioners and counselors. Ideally I would like to further progress my career and diversify into a more holistic lifestyle coach role that encompasses my previous degree in physical education into improving health and well-being of others through movement and nutrition.

What I have gained from the BTSM. The knowledge that I have gained about how massage therapy can help a huge range of conditions is invaluable. Also as a highly qualified massage therapist I am beginning to understand that our role is not just to treat the soft tissue, but in many cases a treatment plan to encompass the whole person is needed for best outcomes. My knowledge and awareness of alternative therapies has increased considerably and I now have the tools to be able to question any methods of treatment whether it’s alternative or conventional. I also appreciate that there is valuable need to integrate both. For standards and the profile of massage therapy to be raised it is essential to support the degree and diploma programme, so hopefully in the near future it will be recognised as a mainstream form of treatment which is more accessible to more people.

Words of advice to BTSM students. Enjoy the learning, the pressure won’t last forever.

Stephanie Marshall
Graduating: December 2013
Current Age: 21
Current Occupation: Student
Current Location: Invercargill, NZ
mmsteph91@gmail.com

What I have done and / or plan to do after graduating. While studying towards my BTSM I am building a small client base to massage.

What I have gained from the BTSM. Having completed the qualification I am much more confident. I find it really beneficial working with people to achieve a greater level of general health. Studying has really opened my mind to the huge range of benefits that massage can provide.

Words of advice to BTSM students. Everyone will tell you the same thing, study your anatomy. With a lot of time management thrown in.
Celebrating ten years of BTSM graduates
Graduate stories
Celebrating ten years of BTSM graduates
First Year Grads

After graduating from a degree, there are so many options and different roads to travel down. This story takes a deeper look at what graduates are doing in the year following their graduation from the BTSM.

Cushlia Young

Cushlia Young first became interested in pursuing massage after receiving massage treatment from physiotherapists. After having sporting injuries when she was younger, she was intrigued to find out more about the profession. She chose to undertake the BTSM as it was close to home and covered a wide range of subjects. Cushlia expanded her knowledge of the health care sector while completing the BTSM and has also found it beneficial in her day to day life.

“Professionally this has opened doors and given me an avenue in which I can continue my learning and progress in the time after my BTSM degree.”

Since graduating in 2012, Cushlia has worked in a massage clinic in Christchurch for approximately six months treating a wide range of clients. She has worked with sporting people, elderly, disabled, business professionals, office workers, pregnant women and a lot of other clients with different types of conditions.

“One of the most rewarding moments I have had is resolving Sciatica pain for a couple of clients, which affected their day to day living.”

Being a degree graduate opened up more opportunities for Cushlia when looking for jobs as she has a wider scope of practice, knowledge and massage techniques, compared to that of somebody who only has a certificate or diploma.

Celebrating ten years of BTSM graduates
Cushlia has taken a break from massage therapy and is now living in England as a live-in carer. She wanted to gain some life experience and see the world before she settled down and decided what she wanted to do. Eventually she would like to return to the massage therapy industry. Cushlia aspires to one day own her own business and to be successful.

“My interests in massage therapy lie predominately in Lymphatic Drainage, Nerve Mobilisation and in Sports Massage.”

**Taryn Shine**

Before entering the BTSM, Taryn’s prior occupations included canvas fabrication, baking and gardening among other things. These were mainly in the Tauranga/ Mount Maunganui region. Taryn decided she needed a career change after seeing friends that have practiced massage therapy, she realised that this field interested her and decided she wanted to give it a go.

Taryn was surprised how “medical” the course actually was. Before she began, she thought of massage as “good for you” but now realises how in depth the BTSM is.

“I knew it was good for certain things, but I had no idea the depth of knowledge that would be bestowed upon us.”

Whilst completing the degree Taryn gained valuable skills and a great deal of knowledge. Communication skills were something that Taryn had developed well during the BTSM. She now feels comfortable talking to people in a clinical situation and getting people to understand her. This knowledge has also been useful in general life for Taryn and she now has a greater awareness of health issues and how the body works.

“It’s good to have a solid knowledge base of all things to do with health.”

Currently, Taryn is working full time as a chef at The Kiln in Invercargill and surfs for recreational purposes. After a wrist injury in which she displaced some carpal bones Taryn stopped pursuing massage after graduating; however she has managed to perform the occasional relaxation massage. Within the next 5 years Taryn hopes to be working for herself in a home-based clinic as a massage therapist or working in Australia, in a rehabilitation center.

“It was a worthwhile challenge and experience to do the degree, and I hope to be able to use that knowledge quite soon in the future to make a difference in the world to people.”
Letitia Kelly

Letitia went straight from high school into the BTSM degree after coming across the course and deciding she wanted to give it a go. Over the duration of the degree the three most valuable skills Letitia learnt were professionalism, anatomy and clinical reasoning.

“I think at the end of that (year three clinical reasoning) it kind of gives you a belief in yourself that you can do it.”

As a person, Letitia felt that she became a lot more professional and focused throughout the duration of the degree. With all the knowledge gained she has a new found respect for certain special populations, when she sees or hears people talking about pain she wonders if massage would be of benefit to them and thinks about what she could do to help.

“I have personally gained a sense of accomplishment being able to complete a degree. I was just a person when I began studying, but now I can see and understand the importance of professionalism and what it means to be a professional now that I am.”

Letitia is not currently working as a massage therapist, but in the future would like to travel overseas and possibly gain a job within the field of sports massage. One day she would also like to have her own therapeutic massage clinic.

“The most rewarding part was graduating, but also my time in a community clinic. It’s so good to be able to give back.”

Currently Cushlia, Letitia and Taryn are not working as massage therapists for various different reasons, but they have all found great value in completing the BTSM. Before entering the BTSM programme, their idea on what it was to be a massage therapist was to “rub somebody.” They now realise how much knowledge was gained from the degree and all feel they have developed as professionals.
Other Directions

When Jess King completed high school she was unsure of which career path she should take. She eventually decided to study the Certificate of Massage. She found this enjoyable and made the decision to further her massage education, graduating with a BTSM in 2005.

Jess feels she obtained a broad range of knowledge by completing the BTSM, giving her the skills she needed to work with different types of people, respect different cultures, and establish a business. She found that,

“The best thing to do is to own your own business and you learn [how to do] that through the degree.”

After graduating from the BTSM Jess spent one more year in Invercargill massaging along with other work. She then decided to move to Perth, Australia, and continued to work for two more years in massage therapy. This included doing some pre-season work with the Western Force rugby team.

After deciding that it was time to make a change in her career, Jess began working in the mines of Western Australia. She now owns her own mining business, and this has the added benefit of no longer needing to fly to her place of work as she is now based in Perth full time. Running this business has been Jess’ biggest challenge since graduating from the BTSM.

“I've taken a different career path . . . running my own business has been a bit of a challenge.”

Jess would like to open a massage clinic within the next 3 to 5 years and work there while employing someone else to run her mining business.
Jess’ advice to upcoming graduates is to:

“Get as much hands on experience as you can. You can know everything there is to know out of a book, but at the end of the day, you need to have really good people skills and really good hands on skills.”

Angela Sharp was in the first group of students to graduate from the BTSM in 2004, and like Jess she found herself veering away from the massage therapy career path. Angela massaged for approximately a year after graduating before moving into an administrative role. Having the BTSM assisted her to obtain an administration job within the health sector and she has been working in health administration and management since.”

Angela states that she is “an administrator or office person at heart.”

Angela stayed in Invercargill for around five years before moving to New Plymouth for a year, eventually settling in Auckland where she has resided since. She is currently working for a private radiology company. The role was initially as a receptionist and Angela has now moved on to being area manager, where she looks after eight branches of the radiology company within Auckland.

Angela perceives her greatest achievement since graduating to be moving into the position that she is in now as she has always wanted to get into health management and I’ve only been with this company for three years and I’ve gone from reception to office manager to area manager [in that time] so it’s quite a big achievement for me.”

The skills that Angela developed from the BTSM have been useful in her career path, as the anatomy and health knowledge that she obtained gave her a huge advantage in getting her to where she is now. She is still using that knowledge in her current position.

“I can receive a referral and look at it and have a bit of knowledge about what it means. So that’s helped me progress to where I am now.”

In addition to this, Angela also found that learning about how to communicate with different cultures and having a broad cultural awareness has helped her significantly in Auckland, where there is a large multi-cultural community.

Angela’s advice to upcoming graduates is to:

“Take everything you can from the degree. Spend time with your fellow students and just take all of the knowledge you can from your tutors because once you’re out on your own it’s a lot harder . . . use all of the experiences that you are given. Some of the
Celebrating ten years of BTSM graduates

placements aren’t where you really want to be right now, but you can still learn from it . . . take everything that you can get.”

Angela adds:

“I guess the degree is one of the best things I’ve ever done for myself. Although, I’m not practicing, I don’t regret doing it at all. It’s one of the best things I’ve ever done and I think it’s a really fabulous degree.”

Samantha (Sam) Hunt was in the first group of students to graduate from the BTSM programme in 2004 with Angela, and has also moved into a career path other than massage therapy.

After graduating Sam massaged for some months and also worked for an optometrist and in a pharmacy before heading overseas. While travelling, Sam taught English and also worked as a live-in carer. Sam is currently employed writing legal contracts. Sam found that her biggest challenge after graduating was . . .

“figuring out where to go next.”

She also found that the degree opened up opportunities for her outside of the field of massage. Sam explains that she taught English as a second language and did a TEFAL course in order to do that.

“It’s very difficult to get into that industry if you don’t hold a degree. So even though my degree was in massage therapy, it was still a degree and it enabled me to do work in that area as well.”

Sam received a thumb injury due to overuse while massaging. She would like to get back into massage therapy but doesn’t know if her thumb injury will allow her to do so.

Sam’s advice to upcoming graduates is to:

“Be careful about not injuring yourself.”
On the Move with Massage...

Melody Dickinson first began her massage career in New Zealand briefly before heading to Perth, Australia to work in a sports and remedial massage clinic for two years. This was her favorite country to work in as she found that:

"In Australia everyone's a lot more open to looking after themselves and actually trying to help themselves."

Melody feels that in New Zealand and Australia, people are more open-minded and knowledgeable about health care compared to London where she has recently moved. She has been working there for the last five months in a sports and deep tissue massage clinic. Melody found that the qualification standards are not as high in London so there is not as much confidence from other practitioners to refer to massage therapists as there is in Australia. In the future, Melody plans to travel to Canada or America and continue her journey as a massage therapist.

Deborah Harris began her career after completing the Diploma in Therapeutic and Sports Massage at SIT and moving to Palmerston North to work in a clinic and provide chair massage. She then headed for Wellington where she continued working as a therapist, but also in a health store and studying herbal medicine before going back to SIT to complete the BTSM. There was then a short period when she returned to her first massage job in Palmerston North before heading to London for a year and a half. She worked in a massage clinic in Notting Hill Gate but found that the clients’ perceptions of massage there are different to in New Zealand. She found most clients were highly stressed and would often want a full body relaxation massage without understanding the benefits of more therapeutic techniques. Deborah also worked doing chair massage for big conferences and events, which she found to be a more enjoyable environment to work in. She also learnt a new modality while in London by attending a workshop on Indian head massage. Making her way back to New Zealand following the UK trip eventually brought her back to Wellington where she has been working full time as a massage therapist within an osteopathy clinic for the past two and a half years amongst a multidisciplinary team.
What she enjoys most about the job is

“Being able to give people hope and being able to reduce their pain.”

Samantha Hunt started running her own massage business part-time while still studying at SIT. It was based at a chiropractic clinic in Invercargill, and the focus was therapeutic massage. She really enjoyed this and once she finished her studies Sam moved to Christchurch for a few months to run someone else’s massage business while they were overseas. This clinic operated in a gym, also providing workplace chair massage. She then moved to Rarotonga in the Cook Islands where she worked in a spa as a massage therapist full time for about five months. Sam continued travelling but took a break from working as a therapist due to an overuse injury to her thumb. Samantha says the best part of being a massage therapist was

“Making a difference to peoples lives, having results in terms of either wellbeing, comfort levels or mobility,”

and in the future hopes to start her own massage business again.
A Trans-Tasman Direction

Aly Curd graduated from the BTSM in 2008. Since then she has gone on to achieve many great successes including becoming a clinic manager and travelling overseas.

Aly had no trouble finding work since graduating from the BTSM. She moved to Perth, Australia, where she was employed in a clinic as a Remedial Massage Therapist. Aly has worked in the same clinic for the past five years, and has since been promoted to clinic manager. She currently oversees six other therapists alongside managing the clinic’s accounts, banking, wages and schedules. She also continues to practice massage therapy, treating clients regularly. The clinic encompasses a rehabilitative, sports, and remedial massage focus. Aly receives many referral clientele from a mixture of other health care professionals and the clinic caters to a vast range of people from teenagers to the elderly, CEOs, housewives, weekend warriors and elite sports athletes.

Continued education has featured prominently and Aly has continued her professional development with further training. She has studied numerous other complementary and alternative modalities including colon therapy, naturopathy, dry needling, Pilates, oncology massage and Tuina massage. She often integrates these into her clients’ treatments alongside massage therapy. Aly uses Pilates with her massage clients to teach additional strengthening and stretching exercises. She also incorporates her naturopathy knowledge by informing clients of the many different health alternatives.

Aly had the privilege of traveling to Beijing, China with a group of ten qualified Massage Australia massage therapists to study traditional Chinese massage (Tuina Massage). The two week trip involved morning volunteer work in the TCM hospital in Beijing and evening lectures covered Tuina Massage and Traditional Chinese Medicine. She has also travelled to Zimbabwe, Africa and this is where Aly learnt about traditional African massage which was taught to her by the Shona people. Aly believes that while the African

“I get a lot of referrals from chiropractors, osteotherapists, doctors, physiotherapists, surgeons; I have a couple of orthopaedic surgeons that refer to us and a naturopath as well.”

Celebrating ten years of BTSM graduates
Celebrating ten years of BTSM graduates

massage she was shown uses different techniques to those taught in the BTSM, some were quite similar. She feels that the Shona people have a very holistic approach to massage.

Aly believes that the education she acquired from studying the BTSM is of a very high standard. From her position as clinic manager employing massage therapists, Aly has seen and compared the knowledge base acquired from many other types of massage education providers, and believes the BTSM rates very highly. It is Aly’s hope that she will continue her education and she hopes to study medicine in the future.

Clare Carey studied massage therapy in both Australia and New Zealand and has been living and working in Canberra, Australia as a full time massage therapist since graduating from the BTSM in 2009. Clare continues to successfully expand her clientele in the Remedial and Sports Massage clinic where she works. Her passion is working within the sports massage industry, and Clare has had many great opportunities to work with an array of elite athletes.

Massage therapy was a career opportunity that Clare wanted to study due to her interest in sports science, and the hands-on practical component of massage. Clare pursued her massage therapy studies in Australia where she studied the Advanced Diploma of Massage Therapy in Canberra. After completing this, Clare went on to practice massage therapy full time for one year before deciding to add to her massage therapy qualification by completing the third year of the BTSM at SIT.

After graduation Clare moved back to Australia and has been working in the same clinic in Canberra as a full time massage therapist. The multidisciplinary clinic Clare works from is shared with an osteopath who refers clients on to Clare for her expertise in soft tissue therapy. Clare sees an array of clientele of all ages from office workers and weekend warrior sports people, to elite athletes and sports teams.

Clare has a passion for sports massage and over the past few years she has gained great experience from working with competitive Cross Fit athletes, weight lifters, the ACT Brumbies and the Canberra Raiders. Clare is registered with the Australian Weight Lifters Association (AWLA) as a professional massage therapist. She became registered with the AWLA in order to work with a female weight lifting client who is currently in preparation for the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow. There are hopes for Clare to travel to the 2014 Commonwealth Games with her client as a part of the AWLA medical team, but it is yet to be confirmed.

What Clare finds most rewarding about her job as a massage therapist is helping her clients function as best as they can by assisting them to meet their health and fitness goals. Within a future five year plan Clare sees herself still working within the massage industry, buying a home and possibly moving her massage business location to work from her home. Clare says her biggest achievement since graduating the BTSM is:

“Building up my business, getting more regular clientele and a stable income.”
Celebrating ten years of BTSM graduates

Georgette Yanouzas

"If you love what you’re doing it comes through your hands, it comes through your communication, keep finding ways to keep loving what you’re doing."

Graduating from the BTSM in 2011, Georgette (Georgie) now lives and works at Kimi Ora Day Spa in Kaiteriteri near sunny Nelson.

Georgie took a leap of faith immediately after graduation and accepted an offer of part-time work at the spa. There was no guarantee as to the volume of work available but Georgie was so set on working in the industry as soon as possible and putting all her education in to practice that she accepted with little hesitation.

With a background in reflexology and a long-standing interest in developing the healing properties of her hands, massage was not her immediate plan but study was available in the right place at the right time. Georgie’s husband relocated to Invercargill to undertake study of his own and it was at this time that Georgie enrolled in the massage certificate programme at SIT, subsequently continuing on with the degree.

The move to Kimi Ora has proved to be a successful one. Georgie not only works at the spa but also lives onsite. As the spa is a total wellness retreat she has experienced some of the best health of her life.

A broad cross-section of clients are available; ranging from relaxation clients, to those requiring a more therapeutic touch and those from special populations such as cancer sufferers, pregnant women and those with chronic illness. Georgie has enjoyed having the opportunity to collaborate with her manager Nicki (also a BTSM graduate) and educate their clients and local residents on the benefits of massage. Many of those they come in contact with are delighted and surprised to discover the breadth of training these

“I used to massage when I was a little kid, I would rub my mums shoulders, I would rub my dad’s neck and I was always the person doing that….I had done reflexology and Indian head massage, I thought well I’ve done the feet, I’ve done the head, let’s see what’s in the middle.”

Georgette Yanouzas
ladies have accomplished – a fact that Georgie has no qualms in advertising. They reach out to locals with a loyalty programme as much of their business is transient through the tourism trade, and have presented a number of short educational seminars on the benefits of massage.

Long term plans are firmly in place. Being of Greek descent Georgie aims to establish a wellness centre in Greece. It is hoped that this will occur within the next 5 years and would provide an opportunity to spend half the year in Greece and the other half at Kimi Ora.

As many BTSM students will relate to, Georgie found it difficult to strike a good balance while studying between hands-on time and study time. Her innate need to be working on people in a physical sense was strong, and although this was a big focus for her she opted not to develop her clientele while studying as some students choose to do. For her it was more important to focus on her study and then move on to the development of her client base once this was complete. She recommends getting as much practical experience as possible while studying however, as ultimately this will reflect on your ability to provide a confident, competent service. She holds a lot of satisfaction in the fact that she managed to do this while also maintaining good grades – something that as a mature student was very important to her.

Georgie’s passion for her trade is evident as is her appreciation of and respect for her education providers. Although extremely satisfied with the education she received, she harbours concerns over the lack of consistency within the industry. She looks forward to some agreement on this point being reached among nationwide education providers and believes that regulation within the industry of some degree may be instrumental in achieving this.

Although already seeing a wide range of clientele in her place of work, Georgie believes there is scope for growth within the industry, in particular within the field of special populations – pregnancy, cancer, the elderly, arthritis and other chronic diseases. She believes there is already a shift within the mainstream medical industry to become more accepting of massage as a viable treatment – either stand alone or as an adjunct to more conventional treatment depending on the condition. This is an area that as massage therapists we can only hope will continue to grow – both for the success of our industry as a profession and for the well-being of our clients.
Tracey Senior

Tracey’s goal on beginning study was to become a business owner. Since graduating from the BTSM in 2010 she has gone on to achieve her goal and now operates “Hands on Health Massage Therapy” in Invercargill. While she sees a wide variety of clientele, sports and remedial massage has become a strong focus. This is a far cry from her initial expectations of the direction she would follow, believing at the outset of her study that she would prefer to operate a relaxation massage clinic. Tracey is now a High Performance Sports NZ provider and she massages the New Zealand ballet when they are in Invercargill. Her experience also includes massaging the Scottish team in the 2011 Rugby World Cup, the Southern Steel netball team, and this year she will be working with the Silver Ferns.

Prior to studying massage Tracey worked in administration and was also involved in a gym. She is a certified Les Mills Body Balance instructor and was interested in health. She admits she didn’t know much about massage at the time; it came about mainly because she was “looking for something to fit in with family”. While studying, she rented a room in town to practice massage from. This led her to realise she wanted to be her own boss. She enjoys the flexibility of being self-employed as she is able to work her business around her 3 children. She has since operated out of a number of different locations before settling on her current place of business alongside several other multi-modality practitioners.

Tracey strongly values her education and believes by completing a degree she has greater recognition and so receives more referrals than she may have otherwise, including those from chiropractors and physiotherapists. Professional development is on-going as Tracey loves learning and regularly attends courses promoted through Massage New Zealand.

“I think most importantly my passion is to help members of the public, and educate them in the benefits of Complementary and Alternative Medicine.”

“I also believe that as a therapist I need to be constantly learning and up-skilling.”

Celebrating ten years of BTSM graduates
Some courses undertaken include a Certificate in Clinical Orthopaedic Massage Therapy – Neck, and dry needling which she integrates within her business. Tracey hopes to continue to develop her skills and incorporate massage into other modalities.

What Tracey enjoys most about her job is building a good, trusting and strong relationship with clients, and seeing their results. She believes there is potential for growth in the massage industry in the field of rehabilitation and injury recovery and while this is part of what she currently does, many of her clients present with occupational stress and postural problems. The inconsistency of workload can present a challenge at times and this is really the only negative aspect Tracey finds to running her own business. For her, the benefits outweigh the disadvantages.

Tracey’s advice to upcoming graduates is:

“I still love learning. I’m always reading all the time, it never stops really.”

Wendy Paterson

Wendy Paterson’s journey began at a weekend massage workshop with a group of friends which she found to be really enjoyable. It was mainly relaxation techniques but was a very good introduction. A few months following the workshop Wendy made the decision to do something new with her life. She had no idea what but went looking at options and massage came up.

At that point Wendy had no idea what she could do with massage, but it was something she thought could be interesting so she did some research into the course and

“jumped in boots and all.”

Wendy applied, was accepted and made the move from Blenheim to Invercargill. Massage is what she envisioned herself doing for the rest of her days. Going in to the degree Wendy had goals of helping others. Going into the degree Wendy had goals of helping others. These goals didn’t change but over the duration of the course however, Wendy’s mindset changed as she began to understand where massage could take her, and she really enjoyed learning.
Going into the course she was thinking more along the lines of working with relaxation massage, but as she got involved in learning pathology and ROM testing, Wendy realised she was at a different level of learning and it was exciting. 
For Wendy everything just fell into place; it was like she was doing what she was meant to do. However she did still meet some challenges. Wendy never thought of herself as academic but completing the degree showed her she could be.

“It was really hard for someone who hadn’t been at school for 20 odd years and someone who wasn’t academic. One of the hardest things was learning how to write again. When you haven’t been to school for 20 odd years putting ideas into words or onto paper is difficult.”

Because of the degree Wendy has clear goals and knows how to achieve them. She doesn’t care what anybody else says if she wants to do something she makes it happen.

“I’d never been able to do that before and I believe these skills came out of the degree. Prior to the degree I was a completely different person. I gained so much confidence and that’s helping me in my own business endeavors.”

Wendy currently works as a sole trader out of a busy chiropractic clinic in Winton and Invercargill and also works at the hospital treating staff once a week. The opportunity to integrate a massage clinic along side a chiropractic clinic has been fantastic; the referral of clients between the two modalities works really well.

At first Wendy was a bit intimidated by the thought of this but completing the degree has allowed her the skills to feel equal to these health professionals and receive respect for what she does.

When Wendy started her business she met some challenges such as people’s perceptions of massage, building up a client base, finding the right accountant and even just being out from under the SIT umbrella. But she found it all just comes down to client education and patience.

Wendy is a big believer in continued education and says, “You should never stop learning.”

She is currently studying a Diploma in Naturopathy. Wendy has interests in both nutrition and herbal medicine and aims to integrate the two one day.

Wendy is pleased she decided to complete the degree as she has found, “The degree has given me credibility.”

Celebrating ten years of BTSM graduates
Barbrin Bormann

Barbrin began her massage career with a Certificate in Relaxation Massage through SIT then continued on to do the BTSM. She found the course challenging, especially undertaking a huge research project in year three that nearly got the better of her. But through the work she put in she found that working with clients was extremely rewarding. The BTSM made her confident in the knowledge she gained about the body.

“The idea was in the beginning to know my body. And really be independent of doctors in order to repair myself.”

“Massage is not massage only, it’s the whole body.”

Barbrin is pleased that she completed the degree and acknowledges that it takes three years to obtain all the information and even then, further education is important to her.

Having graduated back in 2010, Barbrin has been in the massage industry for five and a half years. She began working at Millbrook, a luxury 5-star retreat in Queenstown, whilst she was still studying the BTSM. On completing the course she continued working at Millbrook full time for the next two years.

When the spa industry became more product orientated, Barbrin decided to get out into the community and start working on building her own massage business. She also worked for Mobile Massage in Queenstown for six months. Now with her own very successful massage therapy business in Arrowtown, she finds the work she did at the start has really paid off.

Being able to educate people has been one of the many things Barbrin has enjoyed about her qualification. She would love to normalise stretching in schools so kids will grow up looking after their bodies. She educates her clients to help them improve their health and finds explaining the reason for stretching and exercises as part of their rehabilitation, the more the client benefits when they adhere to the programme.

“I think I will always be in bodywork.”
Julian West

Living in Bluff, New Zealand, Julian has established a career as a massage therapist. He says it offers him a chance to give back to the community which he has belonged to since he was born, and where he still lives as a single father to his 2 boys.

Previously a radio announcer, Julian has found the career change to massage therapy very rewarding. His progression to being a massage therapist began with a vague idea of what massage could do for health and wellbeing. He has since learnt there is a lot more involved in massage therapy for a BTSM graduate than he had ever imagined. Graduating from the BTSM gave Julian the foundation on which he has built his massage business. Although Bluff is a small coastal town with a population of 2000, he feels it is large enough for his business to be successful.

Julian is fascinated by the physiological workings of the human body and using massage to change how the body reacts gives him great satisfaction. The BTSM developed him as a massage therapist and as a person; it gave him a clear understanding of posture, health, strengthening, exercise and ethics. He thinks the knowledge of anatomy and the location of structures are some of the most valuable skills a massage therapist can have.

"They show you the myofibrils, myofilaments, fascicles, perimysium, endomysium and epimysium... you see areas of injury and you know [they] can be healed. The body heals itself every day with varying degrees of success depending on your health. That knowledge gives you the understanding that healing can be sped up and supplemented with massage."

Julian believes experience in dealing with people and the ability to communicate well are important qualities in a therapist. He also feels that a therapist's demeanor is very important in helping a client relax during a massage treatment.

Julian finds travelling and/or carrying a massage table with him to be difficult because he is blind. This means he has to rely on other people, leading him to stay settled in his current, familiar location. Studying was a very difficult process and "being blind is my unique challenge." Julian can be seen as an inspiration to many for what he has achieved.

In the future, Julian plans to upgrade some of his massage equipment and purchase some new accessories to complement his practice. He plans to continue to develop his client base in Bluff, and continue on his massage pathway.
49 year old Brendan Bird worked as a stone mason as a teenager before moving onto engineering, geology, teaching and construction. While the money and travel with his previous occupations was good, Brendan needed something worthwhile that could sustain him in body, mind and spirit. While living in Japan, Brendan found himself helping build a Zen garden and spending time with a practitioner of Tai Kyoku Ken. Brendan then suffered from some health problems, contracting malaria. While recovering from this he was treated with both western medicine and eastern therapies. It was at this time he thought he would like to learn to help people as well. Brendan had not always aspired to be a body worker but had enjoyed being on the receiving end during his sporting days and rehabilitation.

Some years later Brendan enrolled in the BTSM at SIT. Brendan’s age and life experience gave him the discipline and focus to get through the BTSM. From the time Brendan read the course outline he had a clear indication that the BTSM was thorough in all the fundamentals of becoming a qualified massage practitioner and realised there was a lot more to it than just rubbing someone’s legs.

After completing the BTSM Brendan decided to complement his massage training by studying acupuncture for four years. Having a base knowledge of palpation, anatomy and physiology meant he was well prepared for this. Brendan was able to fund this further education by operating a small massage business from home. When asked about changes he has seen in the massage industry Brendan felt that,

"10-15 years ago there was just dodgy columns in the back of the newspaper . . . now you are getting good quality, well trained people in a specialised role."

He has also found there is a lot more acceptance of massage therapy and a lot more referrals through other allied health professionals though he feels that this never really took off until the last three or four years.
Now living in Kaikoura on the east coast of the South Island, Brendan runs a small community focused clinic offering acupuncture in conjunction with other techniques like NMT, MFR and moxibustion. He operates predominantly as an acupuncturist but incorporates manual therapies as part of his treatments. Time management was a big challenge for Brendan when setting up his business as the sole owner, however, his business is evolving. His new partner is also an acupuncturist allowing for more flexibility and sharing of the work load. Brendan likes to refer clients wanting relaxation massage to a local therapist who specialises in this type of work explaining that,

“We have an ethical obligation to direct people to the right modality.”

He actively refers clients to a local osteopath and also receives clients from them on a regular basis. Brendan has not encountered any challenges because of his gender and puts this down to the quality framework of the BTSM.

During a stint as an acupuncturist on a cruise ship in Alaska, Brendan was able to use his clinical skills on a day to day basis while travelling. While the travel was great, Brendan warned that for a massage therapist onboard, the working conditions were not. Brendan thinks that a graduate of the BTSM should avoid working on cruise ships as a massage therapist because their knowledge and training would be wasted, however, he does recommend it for an acupuncturist.

“Those cruise ships employ people, not massage therapists, people that can sell products and make lots of money for them.”

Brendan feels that for growth of the massage industry, educating people to self refer and come in for maintenance is important and educating your potential client base about what you can do is something that needs to be focused on. Having open days, open clinics or free clinics to educate and inform people is his suggested way forward.

“You need to go out and tell these people; make appointments with your G.P’s, dentists and local sports organisations in your community and tell them what you do.”

He has found that promoting yourself, not getting complacent, meeting people and networking helps. Brendan has found a lot of people have the misconception that you can make a lot of money out of massage therapy easily but he thinks you either need a really good business plan or expand really quickly or you can struggle. Setting up business was a challenge for Brendan and he found that keeping it simple was what worked for him. His advice when starting up a business is to keep overheads low and never discount the barter system.
Brendan found that these people are some of the best advocates for his business and has found word of mouth to be a wonderful tool for growing business.

“Testimonials from your former clients about your work are helpful and when they hear someone else talk about what you do it makes a difference.”

The biggest challenge for Brendan through his time studying at SIT was juggling his education with family. He found that studying gave him something to take his mind off other challenges in life. The support he received throughout his time at SIT from staff was a big help. Throughout the BTSM, Brendan’s communication skills developed well and now places importance on becoming a discerning consumer of research. He has also found that people take him more seriously with a high level of training and confirmed that a healthcare profession is a rewarding and worthwhile career, something he had not found with any of his previous occupations.

The BTSM was everything Brendan expected it to be and found the framework of BTSM important to him. He thinks that the BTSM is a pretty amazing gift for bodywork in New Zealand. Brendan’s advice for anyone planning on doing the BTSM was to get value from your education, know your anatomy like its second nature, and give it 100% of your effort.

“Shoot for A’s... you don’t want to get it half right for your patient, because half the time you are going to be wrong.”
How sports massage has worked for two graduates of the BTSM

Are you a school leaver who’s not really sure what the next step is? Or have you just realised that your chosen career isn’t what you thought it would be? Well read on about two inspiring people. Their career pathways that led them to becoming massage therapists were completely different; however, they are now both sole operators of successful massage businesses.

Zane Harris had already been in the work force for over 15 years before health issues from work and sports related injuries started affecting his ability to work. He started using massage as a way of maintaining his body. This is how massage began to catch his interest. He then did some basic research on the BTSM in regards to the different types of massage techniques involved and what would be required of him. This in turn led to him making a life changing decision to become a full time student at SIT.

Shaye McNaughton’s interest in massage developed from a family member in the industry. By the time Shaye left school she was committed to becoming a massage therapist and enrolled in the BTSM. At the start it was all about being hands on but this changed as the course unfolded and she developed a realisation that to be a massage therapist required a complex and comprehensive understanding of human anatomy, physiology, mechanics, pathology and an understanding of professionalism and business.

Shaye and Zane both started working with sports teams while working towards their degree to gain hands on experience with a large number of clientele from different backgrounds. While doing this it aligned them to certain sports that garnered their interest and gave them a solid foundation for future business.

During this time Zane developed an understanding of what was required to be able to work with elite athletes, in particular becoming accredited with “High Performance Sport NZ.” This became his goal; to gain NZ accreditation. Since gaining his accreditation, which is held by only two other practitioners in Invercargill, it has enabled him to work at national and international level sporting events.

When asking Zane if being a degree graduate had opened up opportunities that he didn’t believe he would have otherwise had his answer was “yes, it’s huge.” He explains that “he has a higher degree of learning and understanding regarding many areas in life” and “it doesn’t open up all doors”, but previously he would have thought some things were beyond his reach; he now knows it comes down to effort and time.

Celebrating ten years of BTSM graduates
Shaye also works with a varying field of athlete’s within her business ranging from top NZ rugby players, netball teams, shearers and cyclists. Every year she also participates in the Tour of Southland as a massage therapist.

Both Shaye and Zane realise that solely working in the sports field at this stage is not a sustainable option for their businesses. They have other clients who come to them for varying types of massage ranging from relaxation to therapeutic and these clients are important to their businesses too. Interestingly they have both aligned themselves with other businesses such as gyms and physiotherapists to increase their client catchment and gain referrals for their businesses but in turn they also support these businesses by referring to them. They both believe that the degree has given them credibility as massage therapists. Shaye finds that if people have an option they will always go for a degree graduate over a certificate or diploma graduate.

Their aim when treating a client whether they are a farmer, athlete or corporate client is for an acceptable outcome for everyone by meeting the therapist’s and the client’s goals. This involves being able to interpret their needs, make a correct diagnosis/assessment and then provide excellent care and therapy.

Shaye and Zane feel the key to having a successful business is communication and professionalism. Whether it is with their peers, clients, sports team, or administrators it is imperative that you can relay good sound information, your notes are accurate and well recorded and you can show empathy and understanding in all situations.

Finally I think both Shaye and Zane want the reader to know that even though it was not always easy for them whilst completing the BTSM, it has been one of the most satisfying and empowering things they have ever done. They came from different backgrounds with significant age differences, however, they are both successful in their own right because of the BTSM, and they are now looking at a future that they are enthusiastic and passionate about.
Alex, Hayley and Jessica all work part-time in the massage industry after completing the BTSM. They all chose to be part-time massage therapists because the flexibility of the hours enabled them to do something else they also love. However, each originally had different individual objectives. Hayley wanted to spend time with her young children, Alex wanted to be a missionary overseas, and Jessica wanted to study to be a hospital nurse.

Jessica at age 17, after experiencing a prolonged stay in hospital following an accident, decided she:

wanted to be in a position where I could help people and could see myself fitting in with medical professionals.

Hands-on massage appealed to her, however, in the real world after achieving her massage degree, she found setting up a business in massage therapy was not easy in the small town of Gisborne. In fact, her advice to upcoming graduates is to,

pay attention to the business paper. Take good notes so that you can use them for future reference . . . I underestimated the importance of the business paper, thinking I was purely a therapist and not a business person.

Recently, Jessica enrolled in a nursing course, which will lead her into full-time work helping people. In the meantime she will work part-time doing massage to fund her study. The BTSM enabled her to grow

emotionally and spiritually, but not financially.
When Hayley was asked, “Have you always wanted to be a massage therapist?” Hayley replied,

“No! I had no idea that this was where I was headed”. She decided on massage because, “I was always a ‘touchy feely’ type, so landed in one of the massage certificate classes, gave it a nudge and loved it, hence the degree.”

After graduating, “I did the tour of Southland and some tutoring in the massage department” at SIT. When asked if she would like to do more teaching, Hayley responded, “Yes, it is in the back of my mind, only in massage, because nothing else would be of any interest.”

After moving back to Invercargill she set up a massage clinic at the rear of her property, which is convenient for her with two young children to care for. Working from home gives her the opportunity to do the thing she loves, as well as looking after family. Hayley in her advice to someone wanting to do the BTSM says:

“Try it, but stick with it . . . I think that is what got me through, was the love of it. You’ve got to love what you do to succeed.”

Alex works two days a week in a clinic alongside a chiropractor and four massage therapists, in his hometown of Canberra, Australia. He has only ever seen massage therapy as a way to help him towards being a missionary overseas. For him massage was always a job and not a full-time career. He was,

“using it as a way of financially supporting myself overseas.”

Alex’s original motivation was to be able to work in a sports setting but as he was “not that athletic” he thought he would like to work behind the scenes. This is where the idea of massage came in prompted by experiencing the benefits of massage for himself after tearing his Rectus Femoris.

Alex found that with a degree qualification he:

“did get a little bit more respect. People see you actually know your stuff.”

Maybe the moral of the story is that it doesn’t matter whether or not you end up as a full-time massage therapist, the experience of achieving the BTSM and working as a part-time therapist has its plusses. It is all worth it.
Group Massage Clinic

Derek Tan, Alana and Susan Cochran are all graduates from the BTSM. After graduating they worked part time as massage therapists until November 2010 when they set up a business together in Invercargill named ‘Muscle Fix’. They overcame several hurdles on their journey with the new business including learning about commercial contracts and doing the accounting,

“but having two other partners in the business was a great help” (Derek).

Because the Muscle Fix team consists of two females and a male, this also allows clients to have a choice of practitioners if they have a preference, giving them more diversity.

Alana began her massage journey straight from high school. She initially wanted to become an Osteopath but after work experience in an Osteopathic clinic she was told that to be a successful practitioner therapeutic massage was the most important thing to learn. This led her to the BTSM and on completion of the BTSM she felt that a Masters degree in Osteopathy could wait.

“it (massage therapy) is becoming more recognised as a therapeutic treatment option.”

While studying, Alana worked with local sports teams using massage therapy and sports medicine skills. During this time she became more interested in injury prevention and rehabilitation. “Seeing results or improvements in injuries is very rewarding.” This led to her to completing a Bachelors degree in Sport and Recreation and volunteering for St John. Alana finds her clinical reasoning knowledge the most valuable skills learnt during the BTSM course; these skills were also useful with her further studies.

Derek came to massage therapy after demanding a lot from his body while working as a ski instructor. He visited various different health professionals, then one day a massage therapist and thought this is something he would like to do to help himself and others. Throughout the degree, Derek focused on the academic side of the anatomy and physiology to build a strong platform for his massage therapy skills.
He also learnt how to solve problems and have appropriate boundaries, but most importantly for him was

“learning the skills to do massage in a safe and correct way.”

Derek did some further casual training with Sonny Chin in Dunedin after the course and he found that:

“there is a lot more you can add to massage, it’s limitless, never stop learning.”

He has learnt a lot about himself on this massage journey and believes

“helping to make a positive difference in peoples lives is paramount.”

Susan had originally thought of becoming a physiotherapist which then changed as she left high school and travelled overseas. Whilst working alongside an orthopedic surgeon in a health care centre in Ireland, she saw many people waiting 7-8 years to find out if they needed a joint replacement. This led her thoughts on to what else could be done to help these people and came to massage therapy. With only a choice of studying a degree in massage in London or Invercargill, she decided it was time to return to New Zealand and enroll on the BTSM. Susan believes communication is one of the most valuable skills she has learnt on the course along with the understanding of human anatomy and has developed her compassionate side. She advises to get

“a lot of hands on practice while you are studying” and “keep in touch with each other” once you have finished the course to “have a good network.”

Derek, Alana and Susan source clients through advertisements in local papers and the phone book. They also gain clients through word of mouth from existing clients as well as referrals from Physiotherapists, Osteopaths, Chiropractors, Doctors and the Arthritis Foundation. Their clientele consists of people from the City Council, the NZ cycling team, and squash players. Generally they do a lot of sports, maintenance, rehabilitation and therapeutic massage.

All three have mentioned common areas where they see opportunity/potential for growth within the massage industry. This includes growth within rehabilitation i.e. sports injuries, post-operative and injuries in general. There was also a consensus around the potential for growth within preventative care, for instance with people who are physically active.

“Preventative care . . . I think there is a lot of potential in preventing problems . . . especially with physically active people” (Derek).
They also mentioned it would be great to be funded under a national health service such as ACC due to financial benefits and because they felt that the profession would be more stable and taken more seriously if this happened. In the next 3-5 years Derek, Alana and Susan said they would still like to be working together at Muscle Fix, with the intention of growth within the business.

“I’d like, if possible to be able to do/spend more time in the clinic” (Susan).
Celebrating ten years of BTSM graduates
Final words …

The research project has been a learning journey for the SIT Year 3 BTSM students over the last ten months. It has been a positive experience overall, with highly experienced tutors guiding us through the process. We participated in and experienced all aspects of the research project, learning new skills such as: choosing appropriate methods to gain the most valuable data, finding suitable participants, developing a research proposal, conducting and transcribing interviews and managing and analysing data, as well as knowing when to ask for help and support to keep the project on track.

Collaboration was a key feature of this project and we found both benefits and drawbacks to working on a group research project. The positive aspects included reduced pressure and stress on individuals and the ability to draw on the strengths of each individual to benefit the project as a whole. Some of the more challenging aspects were finding opportunities to come together as a group (due to family commitments or having to travel large distances for meetings) and compiling unified pieces of academic writing that accurately reflected each person’s thoughts and ideas. Working in groups also proved to be more challenging for some, possibly due to group size or the wide range of personalities and learning styles. Time management, planning and clear communication were key aspects for productive collaboration and total commitment was needed from each member of the group to successfully complete the project.

The results of this research give a good indication of common practice patterns in the massage therapy industry and what can be expected for a BTSM graduate upon completion of the degree. Not surprisingly therapeutic and sports massage topped the list of the most common techniques used, with back, neck and shoulders as the most common areas of the body to be treated. These are trends that we have all seen while studying and in our clinics and that we will probably continue to see in our own practices. It was encouraging to see the number of graduates who undertook some form of client assessment and client self care advice. This is something that we have been taught and that will help in the growth and credibility of our profession in the years to come. Less encouraging was the relatively small number of graduates who were members of MNZ - something that many of our class are keen to see change in the future.
The results from this project have also given us insight into the lives of BTSM graduates from a business and personal point of view. The findings indicate that there are a wide variety of opportunities out there for a graduate of the BTSM and this gives us confidence that we will find a niche for ourselves in our massage careers. While the starting salaries for graduates were not as high as we were expecting, the feedback on career satisfaction encourages us to chase our massage dreams and makes us aware of the need for business planning if we want to work full time (20+ hours per week) as massage therapists. We also noted the importance of self-care as a way that therapists can support their health and wellbeing in their work. This is a topic that the 2013 BTSM class has actively discussed and tried to implement.

Overall, the class is proud of their individual and group work in this research project. We have enjoyed compiling and editing this journal. We hope you have enjoyed reading some of the stories, snapshots, and findings and we hope they give you some insight into the reflections and journeys of BTSM massage graduates. As we near the completion of the degree ourselves it has been encouraging to see what those before us have achieved and what the possibilities are for a graduate of the BTSM and for the massage therapy profession as a whole into the future.

Written by Editorial Team of Chelsie Dimmock, Chloe Jackson, Sarah Lock, Bailey McCulloch and BJ Symon (on behalf of the Year 3 BTSM researchers)
Celebrating ten years of BTSM graduates