

2021 Assembly of Delegates Report

Submitted by Assembly of Delegates Advisory Committee (AODAC)

Introduction: This report outlines events from the 2021 Assembly of Delegates (AOD) annual meeting and has been prepared for Delegates and the AMTA National Board of Directors (NBOD). It includes a summary of the discussions around the Discussion Topic (DT) that was brought forth by the AMTA National Board of Directors. The appendix also includes the template that was generated from forum discussions and used to focus AOD meeting discussions.

General Information: This was the fourth annual meeting of the AMTA Assembly of Delegates. Due to the social distancing issues presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, this year's event was held virtually using the GoToWebinar platform and conference calling on Thursday, August 12, 2021. Seventy four (74) Delegates pre-registered for the meeting and 64, representing 43 state chapters, were in attendance at roll call. Delegates were divided into nine (9) groups for small group discussion which were assisted by an AODAC-assigned facilitator that was not a Delegate. Small group meetings were held off-platform via conference call. Following the small group discussion, Delegates returned to the virtual platform for report-outs from each group. The virtual floor was subsequently opened for large group discussion to all participating Delegates, assisted by the AOD Moderator. One (1) Discussion Topic (DT) was presented to Delegates. This DT was submitted by the AMTA National Board of Directors.

Proposed IDEA for a Position Statement:

There was no 'Proposed IDEA for a Position Statement' (PIPS) submitted for review this year.

Discussion Topic: Distance Learning

- The AMTA National Board of Directors submitted the DT with the goal of gathering information from the AOD.
- The near-term goal is to provide immediate volunteer input on the topic of distance learning.
- The long-term goal is to integrate the input of the AOD with other sources of information as the NBOD and profession consider this topic.

Topic: *As synchronous and asynchronous learning options become increasingly adopted in massage education, what changes can we expect as it relates to the massage professions' considerations on the topics of appropriate content for distance learning, and how will that affect AMTA's policies about what it means to be considered "in class"?*

Discussion Overview:

The Discussion Topic was placed on the Delegate Forum of the AMTA Volunteer Hub on June 10, 2021 giving Delegates just over two (2) months for review and dialogue prior to the AOD annual meeting. Proving to be a useful tool for the Delegates and facilitators, a summarized list of thoughts, suggestions, and comments was generated from the forum threads and used as a reference during both the small and large group discussions.

The discussion **primarily revolved around core education** rather than continuing education. The following are key points from this year's Assembly of Delegates:

1. General consensus is that distance learning is now part of our educational future.
 - a. We do not want to fall behind other professions in educational options as most other allied healthcare professions offer on-line education integrated into their educational strategies.
 - b. Look at what other hands-on professions are doing in this area of distance learning.
2. Common defined terminology is essential. AMTA should define terms for better understanding. Terms include but are not limited to: "in-class", "in-person", "face-to-face", "distance learning", "online learning":
 - a. Determine if "in-class" included synchronous on-line classes.
 - b. Review existing language from the education field for consistency.
3. **MUST** maintain the integrity of massage therapy education.
 - a. Hands-on classes must remain face-to-face, or at the very least hybrid with theory being on-line and practice and supervision of hands-on technique and skill assessment being in-person/face-to-face; not on-line.
 - b. Fear was expressed by many that if hands-on classes went to an on-line format, the profession could lose credibility with other healthcare professions.
4. Whatever decisions are reached, they should be based on current research.
 - a. Research regarding classes taught at a distance due to Covid-19 are not the same as the research on established on-line classes.
 - b. Can AMTA re-visit the PIPS (Proposed Idea for a Position Statement) submitted by Whitney Lowe in 2019?
5. It is important that AMTA policy be written in a way that supports our Chapters and their legislative diversity. (i.e. availability of technology and internet access in rural areas)
6. As a leader in the industry, it is important for AMTA to voice their opinion on the topic of distance learning.
7. If AMTA were to recommend distance learning they should recommend a range; i.e. up to 49%.

Discussion Questions addressed to the AMTA NBOD from the AOD:

1. Can AMTA serve as a resource for schools to learn how to do on-line class?
2. Can AMTA develop tools and/or guidelines regarding distance learning (including platforms available, hybrid ideas, etc.) as resources for teachers and schools?
3. Should AMTA work together with NCBTMB, FSMTB, AFMTE and COMTA to determine what appropriate on-line content is?
4. Should AMTA look to COMTA for guidance as COMTA has determined a % of a program that can be on-line?
5. Is it time for AMTA to look at increasing educational hours required to be a member of AMTA?
 - a. What would this be based on?

- b. How would this affect the various states?
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Observations:

1. There were both pros and cons regarding this year's annual AOD meeting being held virtually versus in-person.
 - a. Pros included:
 - The ability to hold the meeting rather than cancel it.
 - The ability to maintain the usual AOD format of small group discussion followed by deliberation on the 'floor' of the Assembly via both conference calling and webinar.
 - A discussion topic that had a clear 'end result': a report out to the AMTA National Board of Directors
 - Additional Delegates that stepped up agreeing to be 'reporters' for their small group.
 - The ability to utilize a 'voting' function on the webinar platform.
 - The ability of Delegates to speak via 'hand raise' function or comment via a text function.
 - The opportunity to work with a platform that has proven useful for both formal and informal meetings.
 - The opportunity to hold a training session for newer delegates prior to the AOD annual meeting using the same on-line platform.
 - The reduced carbon footprint, travel expenses, and time saved by the attendees.
 - b. Cons included:
 - The lack of face-to-face interaction, which we all love and which makes communication easier. **We strongly recommend that the in-person AOD meeting resume when possible.**
 - Because of time constraints and time to move from large groups to small groups and back during the meeting, it is a challenge to have more than one (1) item on the agenda during the virtual meeting.
 - The inability for people to see each other while utilizing this virtual meeting platform.
 - Delegate commentary during the meeting may be hampered slightly by the webinar format.
 - Delegates were unable to converse and make connections with each other before, during, or after the meeting in person.

AODAC thoughts:

This was another exciting year for the AOD in its newer format. For the second year in a row, the AOD annual meeting was held virtually secondary to the Covid-19 pandemic. This format allowed the

National Board of Directors to submit a discussion topic for the first time. This was not possible before. As in 2020, Delegates rallied, held interesting dialogue on the Delegate Forum on the AMTA Volunteer Hub and represented their chapters and profession well during the meeting.

One thing the AODAC has found is that this format allows the AOD to address up to two items thoroughly during the meeting due to time constraints. We have done things to save time like approve the agenda/rules via the forum and put together a template from forum discussions to help focus the AOD meeting discussions. Yet in order for all voices to be heard in the small group we have had to increase the time allotment in all discussion areas. This has allowed for more in-depth dialogue and some very dynamic thoughts and ideas to be expressed. As well we have gone to small group “report outs”. These allow us to capture what has been discussed in the small group as well as the general floor discussion. This should continue in the face-to-face meeting.

The AODAC recognizes the value of the Delegate Forum in this process. It has become essential to the AOD process. As the Delegate position is year round we feel it essential to utilize this format throughout the year. Thus a new Discussion Topic is being posted to the forum. An important aspect to posting additional items for discussion on the forum is to make sure that these discussions are outcome oriented and not a discussion for discussions sake. With that in mind the AODAC will be looking at how to add further value to AOD discussions following the AOD meeting. Some initial ideas to contemplate are as follows:

- Look to approve topics that are primarily information gathering;
 - Determine where in the organization the information should go, i.e. Government Relations Department; NBOD etc.
- Determine practicality of a start and end time for a post-meeting forum discussion around a topic;
- Determine means to vote on an item, if necessary, on the forum.
 - Vote could be on continuing discussion, putting together a report that goes to some entity at National (i.e. NBOD, Chapter Relations Department etc.)
- Look at potential for a second AOD meeting if a topic requires action or if it would be time effective to address a topic/issue prior to the next AOD scheduled meeting.
 - Because of the forum and the ability to do meetings virtually is it possible to have (when possible) a face-to-face AOD meeting at the National Convention and a second virtual meeting at or around the 6 month mark between conventions? This might allow for better use of this format for members and our organization.

Summary

As a whole, the AOD looks forward to gathering in person prior to the AMTA National Convention in the future. All things considered, this year’s Assembly of Delegates annual meeting was very successful. To the question “How effective was the Assembly of Delegates Meeting in fulfilling its stated purpose?” 92 percent of delegates selected “effective to very effective” in the end-of-meeting evaluation.

We look forward to the discussions and the AODAC will continue to work to strengthen the processes of the Assembly of Delegates.

Submitted with respect by:

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APPENDIX

AOD 2021 Template: Distance Learning

This document is a summary of common themes that were culled from the Distance Learning discussion thread in the Delegate Forum.

Note to Delegates: Remember AMTA does not regulate schools in any way, it does not mandate policy for schools, and it does not regulate states. So, any policy that AMTA has impacts AMTA directly yet may have an indirect impact on other share-holders in the massage community.

Part A:

1) Overview of thoughts:

- a) As an industrial leader, AMTA policies regarding education have weight so it is important to choose our public policies wisely. Massage boards, educational credentialing programs and state regulatory bodies look to AMTA for opinions as they make changes to their policies and procedures. AMTA needs an opinion and needs to express it in some way.
- b) Important for AMTA to decide on and support what we believe to be responsible guidelines for 'in-person, interactive on-line (synchronous) and pre-recorded (asynchronous) video education'.
- c) We need to adjust to trends of higher education
- d) Overall, the Assembly feels distance learning has a place in massage education. Both synchronous and Asynchronous modalities should be available in MT industry.
- e) Don't want to fall behind other professions in educational options; most other allied health care professions offer online education integrated into their educational strategies
- f) Both options are needed: would be beneficial for the profession for AMTA to come out in support of it in some way.
- g) AMTA should define what it wants in learning requirements even if everyone does not adopt it. This speaks to what are the requirements to join the AMTA

2) AMTA should look at:

- a) AMTA should, if nothing else, define 'in class' in its current policy.
 - i) In thinking of the definition also consider various verbiage in licensure bills that need defining; can AMTA provide some common language:
 - ii) Define: in person, in class (or classroom), face to face
 - iii) How do these translate when talking about on-line classes?
 - iv) Higher education considers 'class time' any time both instructor and student are present be it virtual or in person (not sure where this definition came from).

3) Need to look closely at all the research to determine if there is a difference pre-pandemic and during the pandemic with how students do with online learning:

- a) Much research actually supports the validity of online education for many courses. Outside of the pandemic issues research suggests on-line education is at least as effective as classroombased courses. Why might this be different during the pandemic?
 - i) The quickness from which people were thrown into distance learning?

- ii) The lack of preparedness on part of many students that suddenly had to do things distantly;
- iii) The lack of technology and the learning curve for instructors that had never done distant teaching before?

4) Is there a need to determine what portion of an educational program can be on-line: Should this be reflected in AMTA policy?

- Some states allow 50%
- Some states allow 0%
- COMTA allows 49%

5) Considerations that may not be appropriate to reflect in AMTA policy but are considerations in distance learning:

- a) Technology makes many ways to make online learning interactive and interesting, allows collaboration with fellow learners.
- b) Yet one of the greatest struggles of late was technology itself.
- c) Access to Wi-Fi may be an issue if more education goes on-line.
- d) Courses could be both synchronous and asynchronous for different parts.

6) Items that may be more in realm of the schools than of AMTA policy: but is there a way for AMTA to help guide any of this?

- a) Key is well designed online classes.
- b) Can AMTA provide guidance on technology to schools?
- c) Combining synchronous and asynchronous methods can be very effective.
- d) Distance learning provides flexibility for students and allows MT schools to be competitive with other trade schools.
- e) Hybrid courses with synchronous and asynchronous aspects might be best option.

Part B

1. What classes could be on-line.

- a. Must have an in-person aspect to hands on technique classes.
- b. Psychomotor (hands-on) skills = physical classroom environment, in person.
- c. Cognitive based subjects = online; examples: anatomy, physiology, pathology, kinesiology, ethics, business, documentation, treatment planning, hygiene, theory.
- d. Hybrid classes:
 - i. hands on theory online; hands on tech in classroom.
 - ii. Sciences basic class online; but could add clinic or lab in many of the examples above, i.e.: kinesiology, anatomy