

Secrets of Teaching Pathology

By Ruth Werner

Pathology can be a challenging topic for students of massage therapy. Many people have resistance to this subject because they find it overwhelming, unpleasant or frightening, or simply because they may feel it will never apply to the kind of bodywork they plan to do.

Pathology teachers have the unique and exciting job of helping students to overcome whatever resistance they may feel, so that they may explore pathology fully and with confidence, and so they may learn to apply their knowledge for the safety and well being of their clients.

Three Guiding Principles

In my many years of working in this field, I have identified three major issues are at the core of teaching pathology well. While these may seem self-evident, I encourage teachers to revisit these ideas and dwell on them a while to see how weaving these attitudes into the fabric of a pathology course may address most students' feelings of resistance. The key issues are these:

Illness and healing. The body's capacity for healing is as important as the process of illness. When we keep this in focus, the study of pathology includes the looking at how we repair or compensate. This frames a context for massage therapy as an intervention that may create an environment conducive to positive change.

Respect and compassion. People who live with conditions deserve to be discussed with respect and appreciation—even the fictional “Mrs. Smith” or “Client X” we make up to act as examples. Unconditional positive regard for our clients is something we must demonstrate in every aspect of our teaching.

Life is an open-book test. No pathology course can be comprehensive. While it is important to know a lot of this material, it is even more important to know *when and where to get more information*, either from this text or from other resources. For teachers, this removes the burden of having to cover every detail of every condition in every lecture. For students, this means they must learn to gather information that they can then process for the benefit of their clients.

“Why Do We Need To Know This?”

It is the perennial question. In the context of pathology the answer varies.

Some schools focus on clinical practice with the vision of massage therapy as an integrated health care profession. For this group, understanding pathology is a foundational piece on which specialties can then be built.

Other schools draw learners who see themselves in recreational massage therapy settings—spas, resorts, cruise ships, or their spare room while the kids are at school. For these people an in depth understanding of pathology may seem less crucial, but it is not.

It always comes back to this: our clients will have issues. Even if you never intend to work in a clinical setting, our clients may come to us with anything and everything, from a common cold to tuberculosis, and we need to know how to keep them—and ourselves—safe. Further, the more we understand about what our clients are going through, from symptoms to treatment options, the better we can serve them.

Building a Course with A Massage Therapist’s Guide to Pathology 6e

We have provided everything you need to build a successful pathology program with *A Massage Therapist’s Guide to Pathology, 6th ed.* as the central text.

Here are the assets available for you and your students:

For Educators:

- Complete Chapter Objectives for each topic
 - Chapters 1 and 12 (Fundamental Concepts and Principles of Cancer respectively) have complete Chapter Objectives in the text
 - Chapters 2-11 cover the conditions; the Chapter Objectives provided in the text pertain only to the chapter introductions, while the Chapter Objectives pertaining to individual conditions are found in the Instructor Resources
- Test bank items coded to each objective, written to meet the ELAP level 1 (Receive and Respond) and level 2 (Application of Concepts) levels of learning
 - Most “level 2” questions are written in the scenario format that the Massage Board Licensing Exam (MBLEx) often uses
- Power Point slides with integrated art and callouts for relevant videos; these are selectable by topic

- Lecture notes (document versions of the Power Point slides); these are selectable by topic
- Chapter Review questions and answers, written to meet the ELAP level 1 (Receive and Respond) and level 2 (Application of Concepts) levels of learning; these are at the end of each chapter
- Sample syllabi for 40 and 60-hour pathology courses, with ELAP recommendations and extra conditions marked

For Learners

- Games for each chapter:
- Sequence the Sequelae
 - A complex condition is described as a series of steps, and learners must put them in correct order
- Design a Session
 - Intake forms from real clients with complicated conditions are provided as an exercise in clinical reasoning: What follow-up questions are necessary, and what strategies will you use to help the client achieve his or her goals?
- Practice quiz for each chapter
- “Labels off” versions of key illustrations with each chapter
- “What Would You Do?” discussion items at the end of each chapter
- Suggested activities to enrich the material at the end of each chapter
- Electronic flash cards for vocabulary practice
- Chapter Review questions and answers, written to meet the ELAP level 1 (Receive and Respond) and level 2 (Application of Concepts) levels of learning
- Crossword puzzles
- Quiz Show
- Robot Man
- Vocabulary games

Class Syllabus: 40 hours

COURSE TITLE
Pathology

COURSE NUMBER
[Course code and number per program requirements.]

COURSE DESCRIPTION
Pathologies in the context of massage therapy are discussed, with an emphasis on critical thinking and practical application of concepts.

CREDIT HOURS
40 credit hours, presented in 20 2-hour segments

PREREQUISITES
Students of pathology must have successfully completed a course in anatomy/physiology

TEXTBOOK
Werner, R. *A Massage Therapist's Guide to Pathology, 6e*. Baltimore: Lippincott, Williams & Wilkins, 2016

OBJECTIVES (SUGGESTION)
Having successfully completed the classroom activities and assignments related to pathology, the learner is expected to be able to make safe, appropriate, and evidence-informed decisions about massage therapy for clients who live with the conditions that are covered. The learner is further equipped to find and evaluate relevant information, and to discuss a client's health status in relationship to massage therapy with the client and/or the client's health care team.

GRADING
Per program requirements

Suggested distribution of points:

5%	Classroom participation
10%	Attendance
25%	Quizzes/homework (cumulatively)
25%	Pathology project
35%	Midterm/Final exam (cumulatively)

COURSE OUTLINE
Note: please see "Curriculum Guidelines: Secrets of Teaching Pathology" to get the best use from this syllabus. Lectures may run long or short; prioritize to cover what you think is *most important* thoroughly, and make the rest the students' responsibility to learn about on their own, using the book, games, suggested activities, and other resources.

“**” denotes a topic recommended by ELAP (Entry Level Analysis Project)

“+” denotes a topic that goes beyond ELAP recommendations for pathology

CLASS 1:

Reading assignment:

MTGP 6e Preface, User's Guide, Chapter 1

Lecture topics:

- Go through the entire syllabus, emphasizing grading structure and expectations, and the timing of quizzes, exams, research projects, and other classroom assignments
- Discuss Preface and User's Guide, with emphasis on student-friendly online features: flash cards, games, Chapter Review questions, appendixes, animations, etc.
- Invite students to share their feelings about being in a pathology course: resistance, fear, excitement, curiosity, etc.
- Introduce pathology as the study of *recovery* as much as the study of *illness*; much of the course with focus in *how people get better* from illness or injury.
- Emphasize respect and appreciation for the client who struggles with health (ultimately, this is all of us). Introduce "unconditional positive regard" as a foundation of the therapeutic relationship.
- Emphasize the goal of weighing risks and benefits of bodywork, and the variables that influence them; point out that this is how the massage discussions are framed at the conclusion of each item.

***Terminology:**

Briefly review principles of using word roots to build a pathology vocabulary

Review key vocabulary terms with emphasis on these:

Acute	Chronic	Complication	Contraindication, contraindicated	Diagnosis
Indication, indicated	Lesion	Prognosis	Sign	Subacute
Symptom	Trauma			

“*” denotes a topic recommended by ELAP (Entry Level Analysis Project)

“+” denotes a topic that goes beyond ELAP recommendations for pathology