

# Review of the Houston Conference May 2004

## By Cindy Heschong Dire

The 2004 spring conference was wonderful. Thanks to all the coordinators of the event, the instructors, and the vendors for all the time and effort they put into making this educational weekend worthwhile. Kudos for a job well done!

On Friday, we had a MERT (Massage Emergency Response Team) meeting that informed us of what role we can play in times of a disaster. This is especially important since our government intelligence agency has information to suspect future attacks here in the continental U.S.

After September 11, 2001, many of us were moved to want to help in some way. We would feel even more moved to do so if something were to happen here in Texas and close to home. Fortunately, we learned that yes, we *can* help. But we can't just show up and expect to be allowed into highly restricted areas. We need to be invited in by the local Emergency Providers.

Friday's information was for those of us who would be the front-line Massage Responders. As a guest speaker, Daniel J. Dire, MD, FACEP, presented a brief overview of his disaster response experiences. In six hours, we covered requirements, standards, command structure, procedures, security protocol, MERT Responder support resources, and chair massage technique. There will be an additional 6 hours of Leadership Training available to all who are interested.

This is a volunteer service. We plan to have local MERT leaders in each large city in Texas and we also need team leaders to cover the rural areas. Each team can have as many members as the leader wants, but the responders will need to be *ready and available* to respond when and if a disaster strikes.

In the class we also covered what that means. The massage team will be allowed on-site 48-72 hours after the initial event. The "event" could be a tornado, fire, hurricane, terrorist attack, flood, or anything that calls us to be of service to those fire fighters, search-and-rescue teams, policemen, and other Emergency Response Providers.

If you missed this opportunity to attend, watch for MERT classes in the future. Attending a class will give you further understanding of how this works. MERT is an opportunity for us to really help if something tragic and unfortunate happens. It is giving support when giving is the right thing to do.

On Saturday, we divided into three teams and rotated classes throughout the day. The classes were Anatomy and Physiology, Lecture, and Cadaver Lab. This was conducted at the Texas Chiropractic College; and I must say that, as a

group, we got a tremendously warm reception from the professors and the school staff. I've personally attended three Cadaver Labs offered through these AMTA-Texas conferences and I can tell you that this was the best. The professors were very pro-massage and treated us with respect as colleagues.

The cadaver labs offered an inside look at our human body. As interesting as an anatomy book may seem, it does not show the three-dimensional details that we have. In the lab, we were fortunate to see more than one cadaver. Because of that, we actually saw a gall bladder full of stones, a heart bigger than anyone had ever seen, lungs filled with cancer—well, you get the idea.

The professor took his time with us and allowed an up-close look at many different things that we were interested in seeing. The smell in a cadaver lab is never pleasant, but we were told there had been good change in the chemicals used for preservation. The odor was *much* less than before! Cotton swabs with essence oil were offered for us to hold to our noses, but very few even used them. And after a while, we forgot about the smell.

I hope we don't forget that we are a privileged group to get opportunities like this. I also hope there will be more of these labs offered in the future. If you haven't gone, get to one!

The massage class was on Assessment and Release Techniques for Common Strain and Pain Patterns of the Lumbo-sacral Musculature. We learned how to release restrictions in the "facilitated" muscles and balance the "inhibited" groups. The muscles that we concentrated on were the Rectus Femoris, Iliopsoas, Quadratus Lumborum and the Lumbar Erectors. This was the one 'good-ole' massage class that got us on our tables again! These are great techniques that we can start using immediately. The information was presented professionally and we all felt great at the end of the class.

The lecture given was "Topics in Contemporary Massage Therapy." The professor handed out articles about Massage Therapy and its use in various conditions. He talked about the overall future of medicine. He presented a new model that also includes alternative and complementary medicine and he described how massage fits into that model. Again, the lecture was delivered to us as contemporaries and we were shown the greatest respect throughout the day.

Saturday night was the banquet. We had Italian food and the live band was a hoot! They played a variety of music and the dancing was fun, both to do and to watch! The exhibitors donated various prizes and we had a door-prize raffle. Good times had by all!

We had several exhibitors that were available to us each evening and all day on Sunday. They were so helpful, and we appreciate each of them for hauling their

wares to and from, and giving us such special attention. It is such a pleasure working with folks who support us!

Sunday was the *spa* day. We learned some very valuable techniques that we can incorporate *now* to offer to our clients even if we may not have a shower available. We did back scrubs and mud treatments on each other. After lunch, we did a facial scrub and mud treatment with soothing tea bags over the client's eyes. Then we did a foot and lower-leg scrub and mud treatment. We were totally soft and moisturized by the end of the day!

We learned that if you wish to do these treatments, get many damp towels and simply keep them warm in an electric roaster oven. Spa treatments are so pampering and therapeutic. You can use them to increase your profit, or use them as a value-added service to your existing business.

Overall, this was an enjoyable conference. We had a good turnout and wonderful education. One of the best parts was seeing colleagues and welcoming new therapists to our growing and popular profession. I look forward to the next Spring Conference on the beach!!! Hope to see y'all there!