



National Certification Board for[®]
Therapeutic Massage & Bodywork

NCBTMB Advanced Certification Needs Assessment Survey Results

Prepared by



Daniel John Wilson, Brian D. Bontempo, Ph.D., Michelle Amoruso, Ph.D.

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Introduction

NCBTMB administered the 2009 Advanced Certification Needs Assessment Survey to massage professionals throughout the field to provide these individuals with the opportunity to provide input into the advanced credential. The survey covered the following areas:

- Defining the Advanced Practitioner
- Identifying the Necessary Characteristics of Advanced Certification
- Identifying the Criteria for Advanced Certification

Needs Assessment Survey Participants

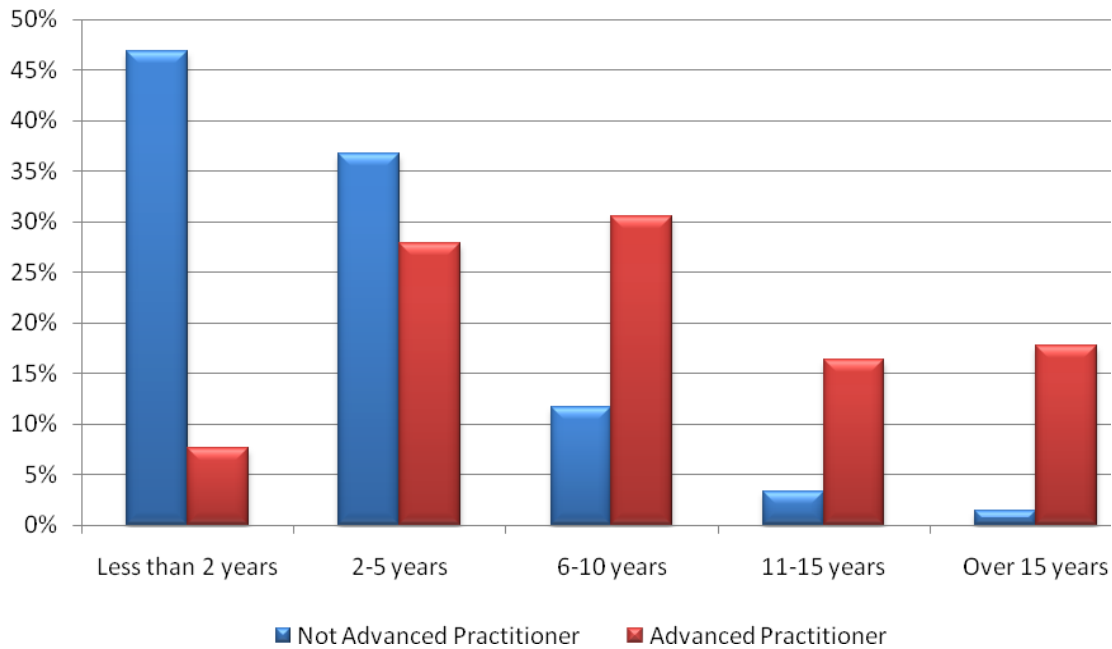
Email invitations to participate in the 2009 Advanced Certification Needs Assessment Survey were sent to massage professionals throughout the field on October 2, 2009. Subjects provided responses to the survey online until October 16, 2009.

In total, 6,883 individuals responded to the survey. Of these, 5,517 (80%) answered at least four questions. Unless otherwise noted, all percentages provided in this report denote the percentage of respondents who provided a valid response to the survey question. Respondents that provided invalid or incomplete responses were not included in the calculations.

Professional Characteristics

Each survey participant was asked a number of questions about their professional career in the field of therapeutic massage and bodywork. The majority of the respondents (70.1%; N= 4,797) considered themselves to be advanced practitioners. Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the responses to the question “How long have you practiced in the Therapeutic Massage and/or Bodywork Profession?” Advanced practitioners reported working in the field for a longer period of time than non-advanced practitioners.

Figure 1: Bar Chart of Total Years Respondents Have Practiced in the Therapeutic Massage Profession



Participants were also asked which of the two current certifications they held. Nearly one-quarter (24.9%; N=1,240) indicated that they did not currently hold either of the NCBTMB certifications. Figure 2 shows the percentage of survey participants by their current NCBTMB certification(s). Regardless of which certification was held, around half of the certified respondents indicated having held their certifications for less than five years (TM: 43%, TMB: 46%, and Both: 51%). Figure 3 displays how long respondents have held their respective certification(s).

Figure 2: Pie Chart of Current NCBTMB Certifications Held by Survey Respondents

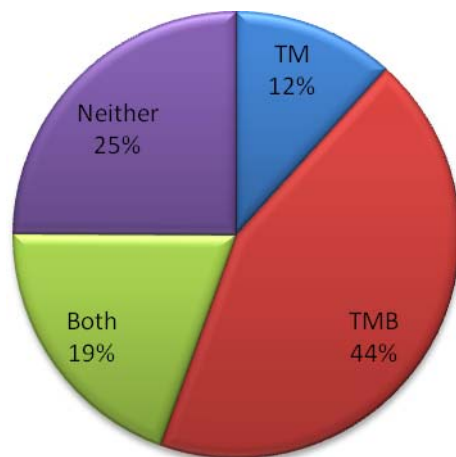
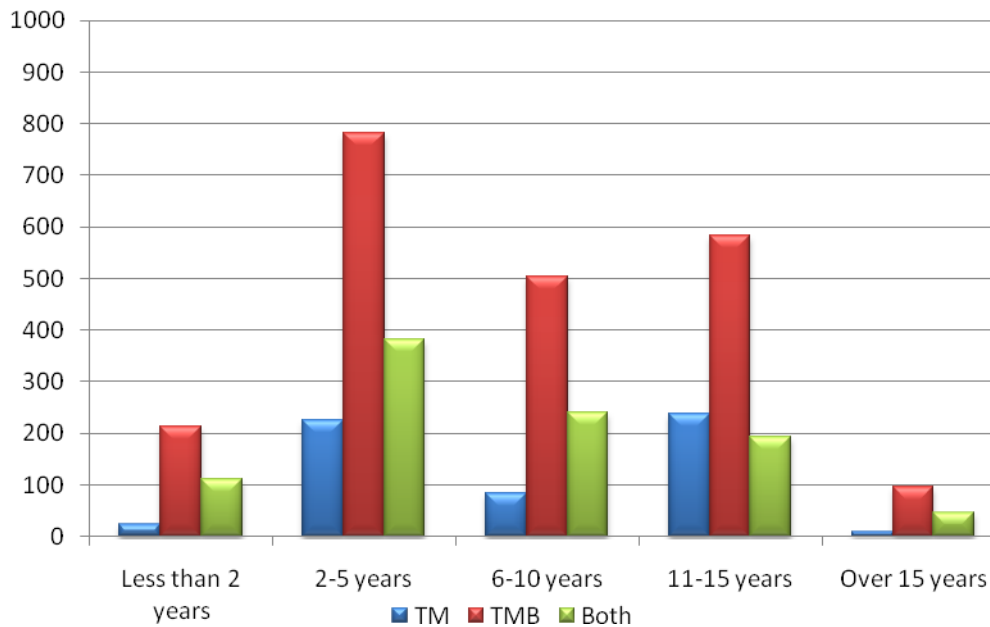
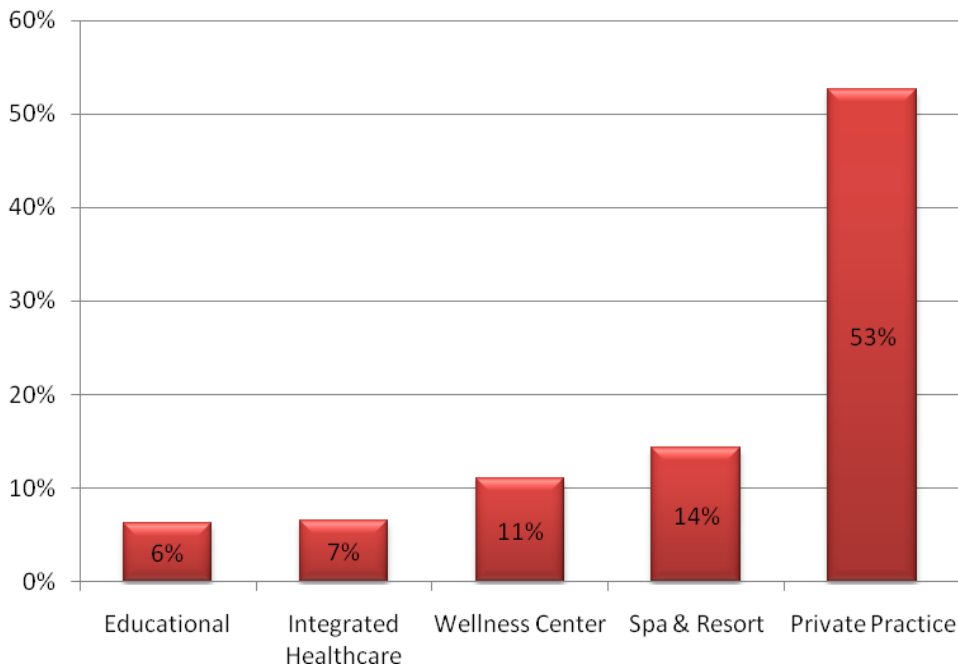


Figure 3: Bar Chart of Total Years Respondents Have Held Current Certification(s)



Over half (N = 2,469) of the respondents indicated that most of their work hours were spent in a *Private Practice* setting. Figure 4 displays a breakdown of the five most frequently reported practice settings.

Figure 4: Bar Chart of Top Five Practice Settings Reported by Survey Respondents



Defining an Advanced Practitioner

One of the goals of the survey was to determine how massage professionals define an individual to be advanced practitioner. Individuals who identified themselves as advanced practitioners were asked to rank the top three factors that distinguished them from a regular practitioner while individuals who did not identify themselves as an advanced practitioner were asked to rank the top three factors that would make them feel as if they had become an advanced practitioner.

Figure 5 describes the responses of participants who identified themselves as advanced practitioners. All rankings (1st, 2nd, and 3rd choice) are shown stacked on each bar, ordered by the percentage of 1st choice votes (labeled on each bar). *Level of Education* was the most frequently identified factor that distinguished advanced practitioners from regular practitioners. The second most frequent factor was *Time in Practice* (see Figure 5).

**Figure 5: Bar Chart of Ranked Factors Defining the Advanced Practitioner
Advanced Practitioner Responses Only**

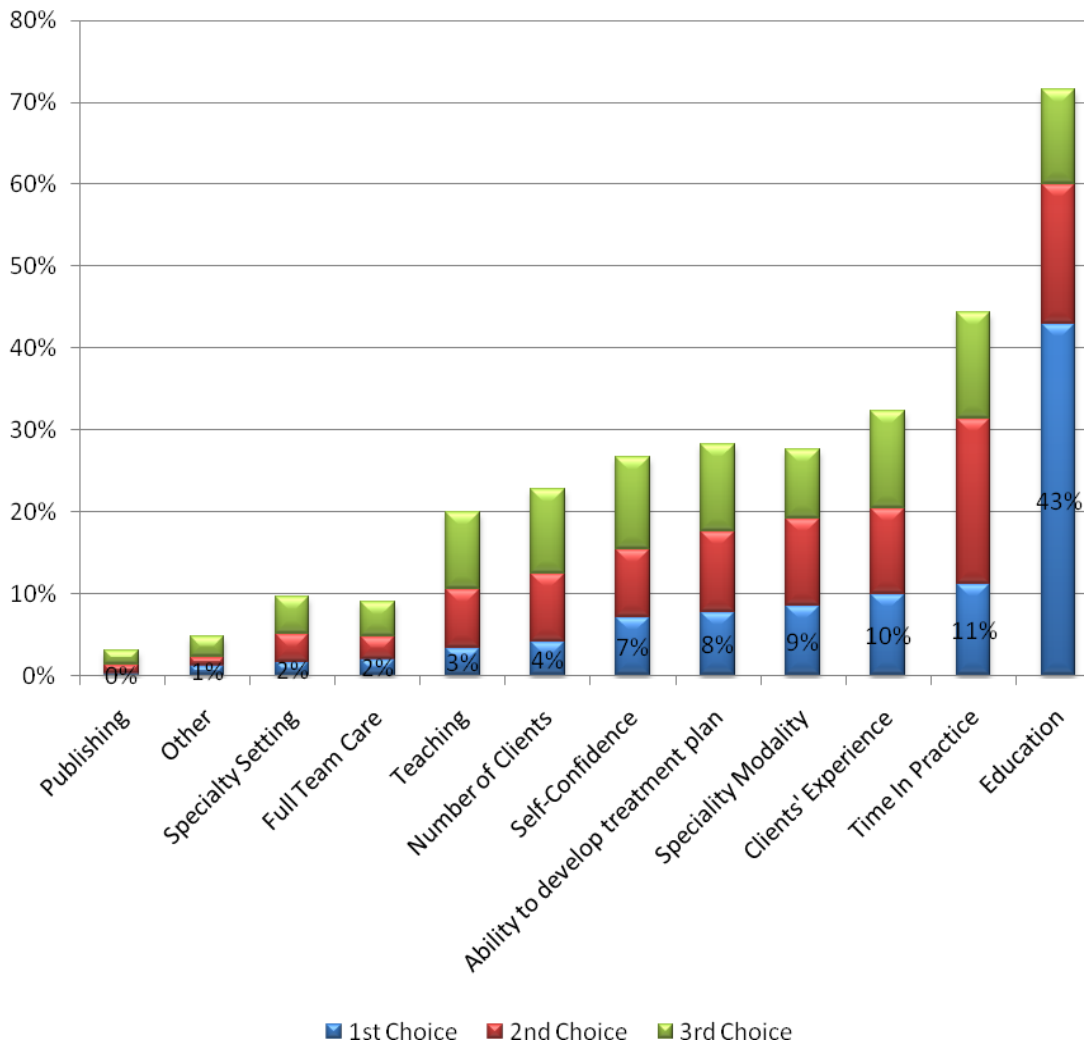
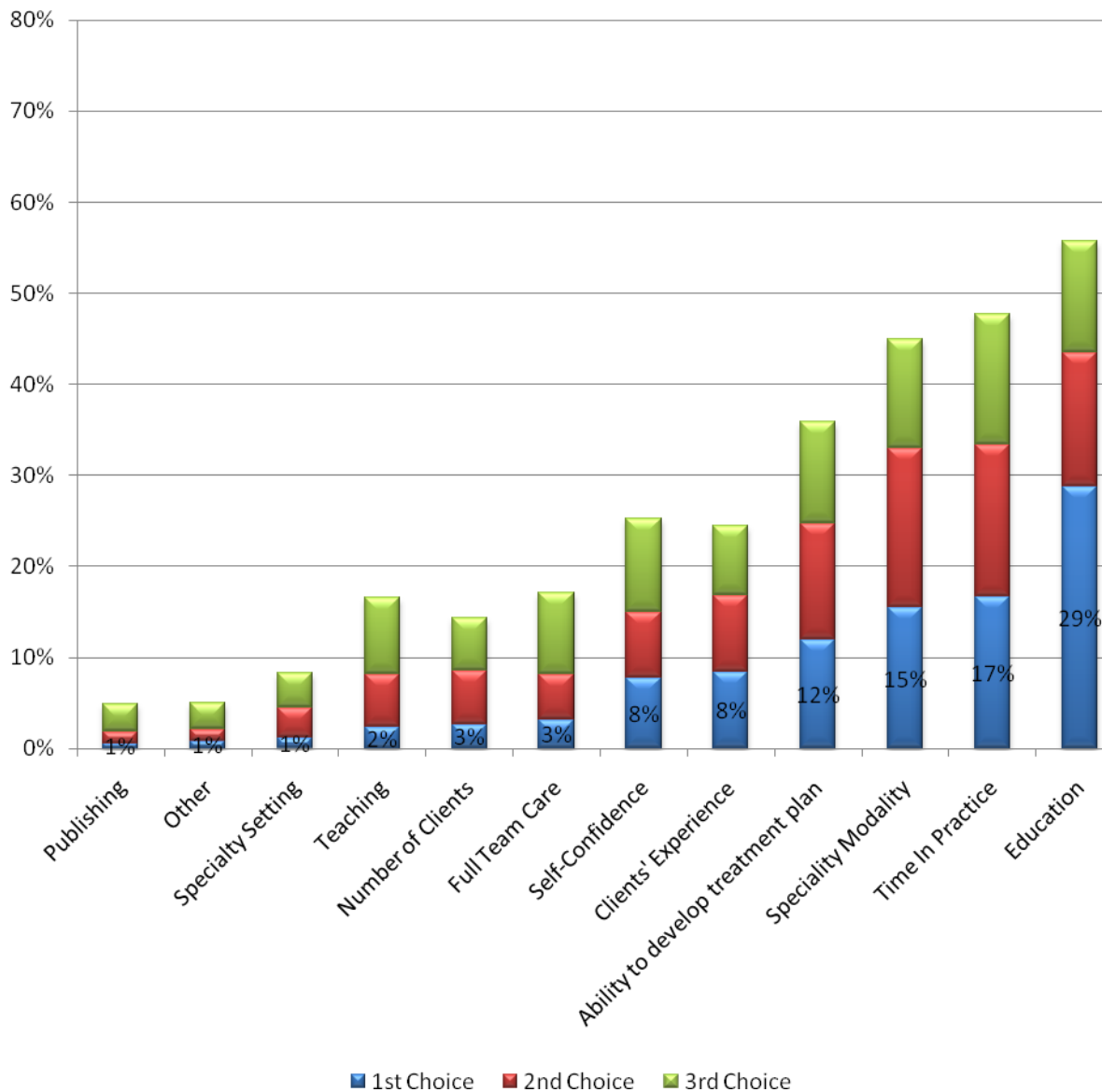


Figure 6 describes the responses of participants who did not identify themselves as advanced practitioners. All rankings (1st, 2nd, and 3rd choice) are shown stacked on each bar, ordered by the percentage of 1st choice votes (labeled on each bar). Once again, *Level of Education* was clearly the most frequently selected factor for defining an advanced practitioner. *Time in Practice* was also the second most popular choice. Whether or not a respondent identified themselves as an advanced practitioner, level of education and amount of experience in the field were the most important factors in qualifying an individual as an advanced practitioner.

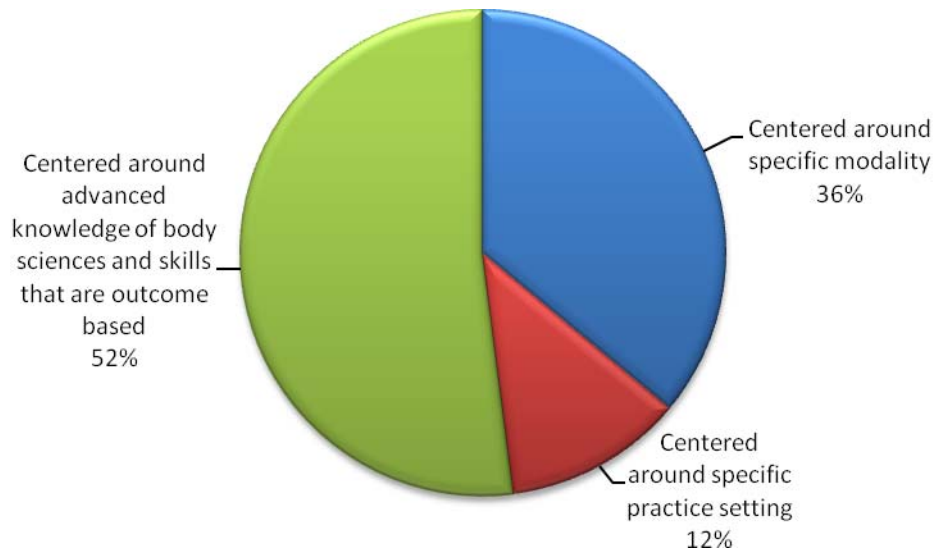
**Figure 6: Bar Chart of Ranked Factors Defining the Advanced Practitioner
Non-Advanced Practitioner Responses Only**



Necessary Characteristics for an Advanced Certification

The second goal of the Needs Assessment Survey was to identify the necessary characteristics of an advanced certification. Over half of the respondents indicated that a “certification centered on advanced knowledge of body sciences (including body systems) and skills that are outcome based” would be most important to the industry (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: Pie Chart of Greatest Reported Advanced Certification Needs



A follow up set of analyses were conducted that investigated if these responses were different for the various subpopulations of respondents. The group of subjects was divided into advanced practitioners and non-advanced practitioners and then separated based on their years of experience working in the massage therapy profession.

Figure 8 shows a bar chart of the status of the practitioner (advanced vs. non-advanced) by the individuals response to the question pertaining to the type of advanced certification most needed by the profession. In addition, a chi square analysis was conducted. Both revealed that there was no relationship between practitioner status and their response to this question. To summarize this one can say that both advanced practitioners and non-advanced practitioners felt that an advanced certification “Centered around advanced knowledge of body sciences and skills that are outcomes based” is most needed.

Figure 8: Bar Chart of Practitioner Status by Advanced Certification Most Needed

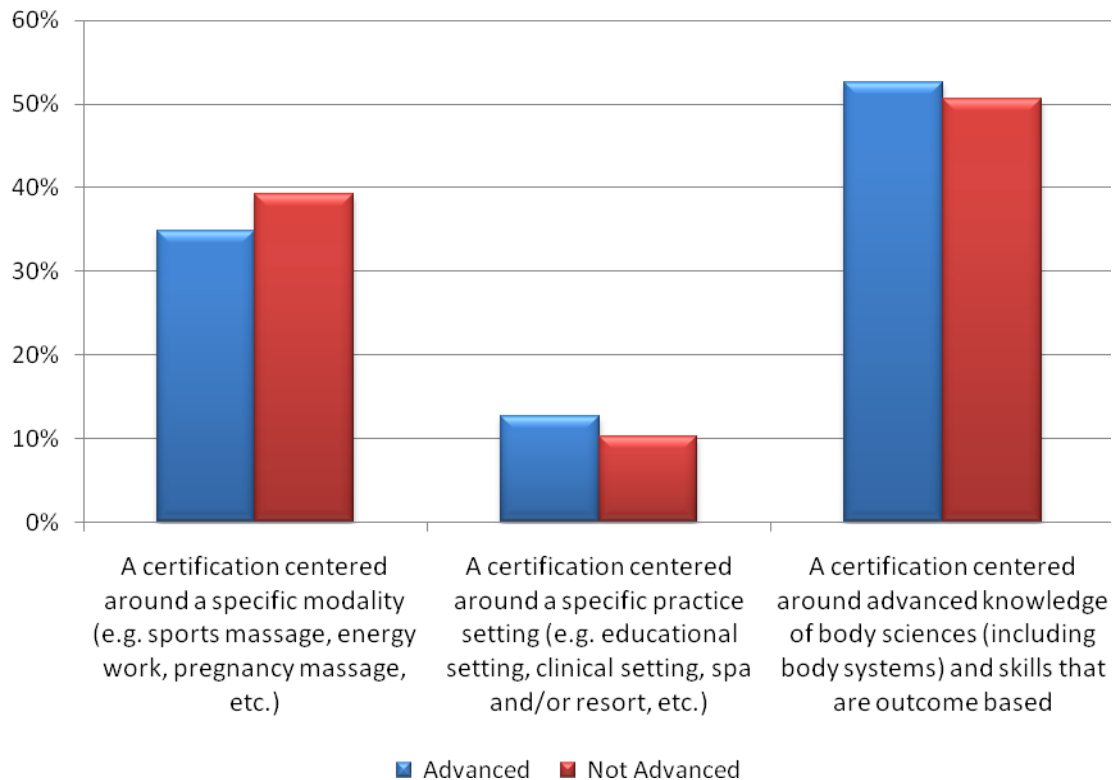
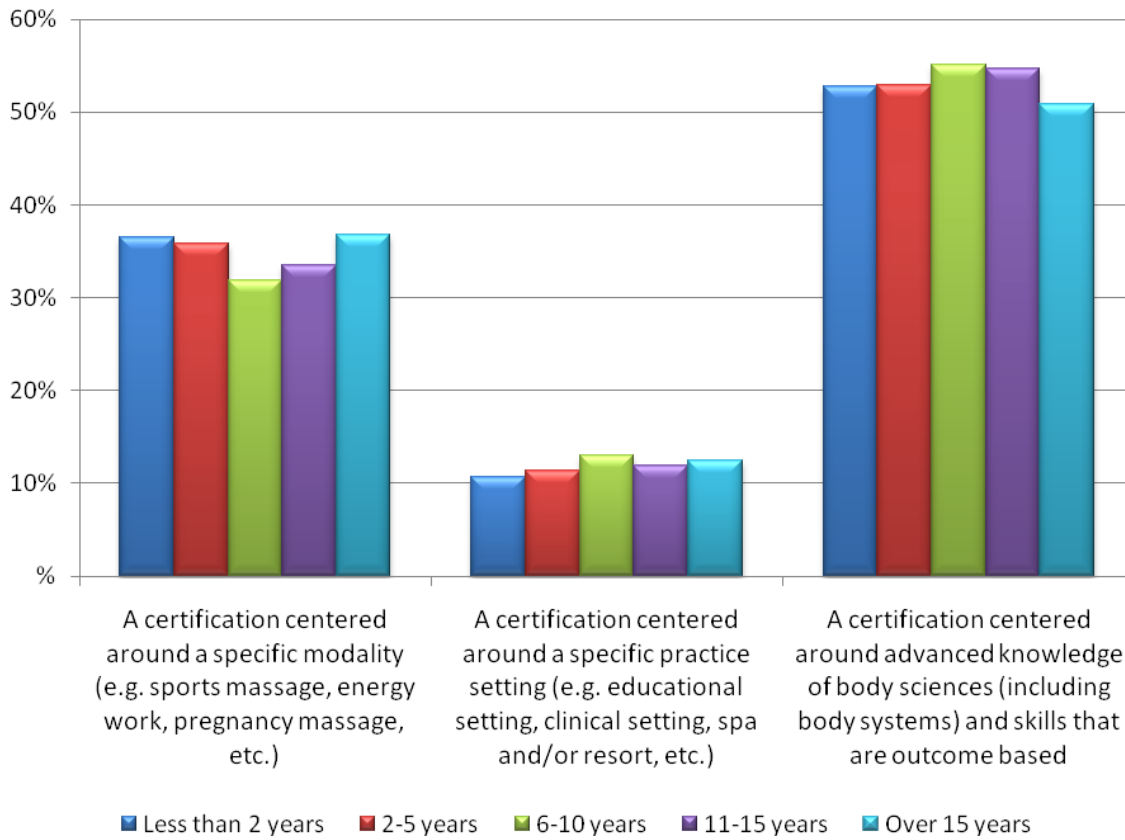


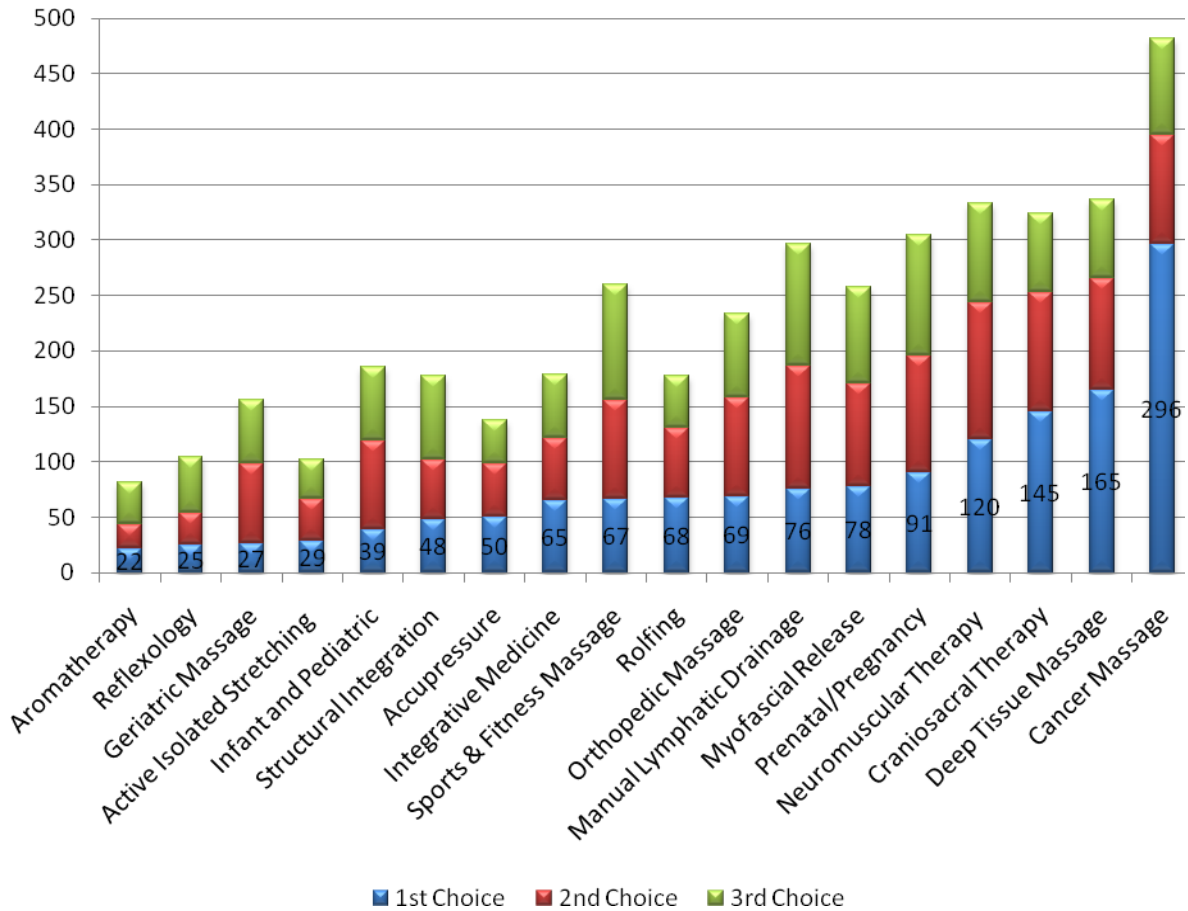
Figure 9 shows a bar chart of the percentage of respondents selecting each advanced certification need by years of experience working in the field of massage therapy. A chi-square analysis was run, which revealed that there was not a significant relationship between these two variables. In other words, practitioners with varying amounts of work experience felt the same way about the type of advanced certification most needed. All responded that the advanced certification should be one “Centered around advanced knowledge of body sciences and skills that are outcomes based.”

Figure 9: Bar Chart of Years of Experience by Type of Advanced Certification Most Needed



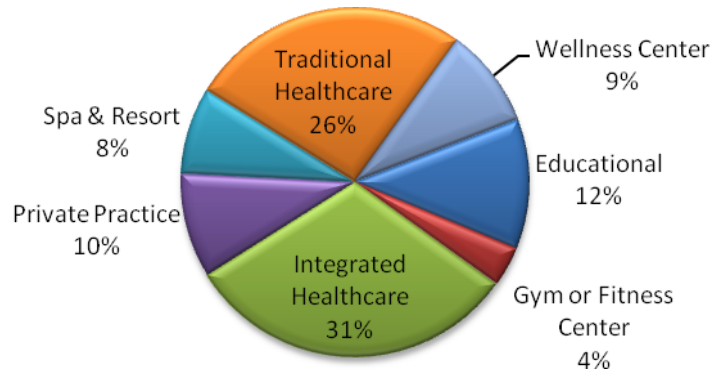
Respondents who indicated that the greatest need was for a “certification centered around a specific modality (e.g. sports massage, energy work, pregnancy massage, etc.),” were then asked to rank order the three modalities of 44 modalities (and given the option of reporting “Other”) that they believe most need an advanced certification. The modalities receiving the highest rankings included cancer massage, deep tissue massage, craniosacral therapy, and neuromuscular therapy. Figure 10 shows all modalities that were assigned rankings by over one hundred respondents, ordered by the total number of ‘1st choice’ ranks received.

Figure 10: Bar Chart of Modalities with the Greatest Need for Advanced Certification



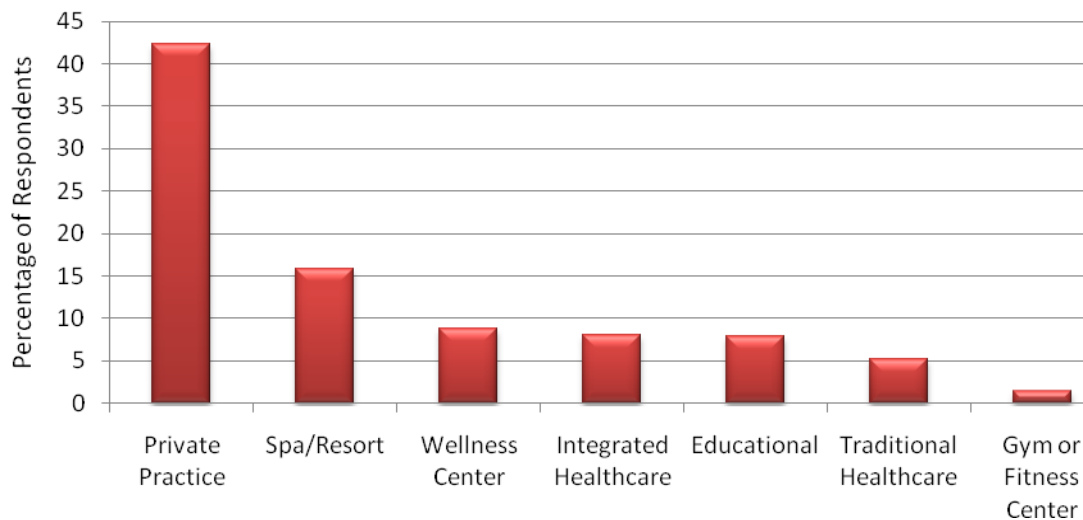
The respondents who selected “A certification centered around a specific practice setting (e.g. educational setting, clinical setting, spa and/or resort, etc.)” were asked to identify which of the seven practice settings they believe has the greatest need for an advanced certification. Respondents indicated that the practice settings with the greatest need for advanced certification are a *Traditional Healthcare Setting* and an *Integrated Healthcare Setting* (see Figure 11).

Figure 11: Pie Chart of Practice Settings with the Greatest Need for Advanced Certification



In an effort to identify respondent bias, the primary practice setting of these respondents was analyzed. Figure 12 provides a bar chart of the percentage of respondents in each of the primary workplace settings that selected “A certification centered around a specific practice setting.” Inspection of the differences between Figure 11 and Figure 12 reveals that the primary practice setting of the respondent was not related to the practice setting that they believe has the greatest need for an advanced certification.

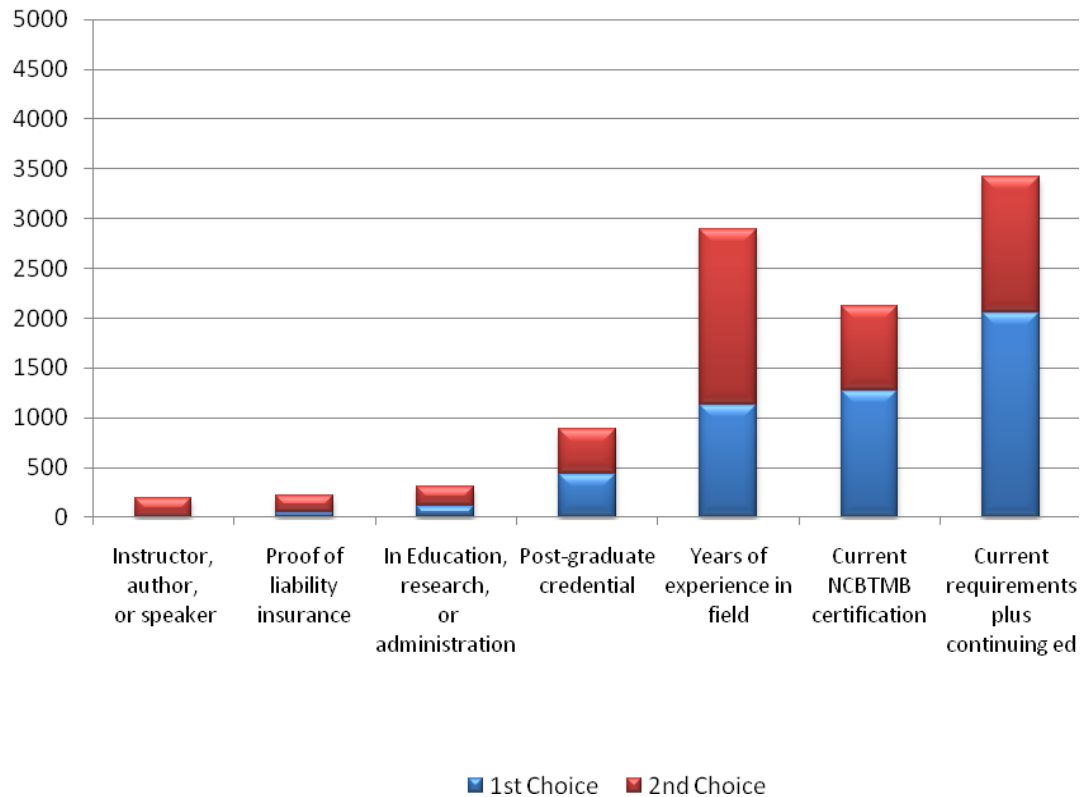
Figure 12: Bar Chart of the Primary Workplace Setting of Individuals that selected “A certification centered around a specific practice setting”



Criteria for Advanced Certification

In order to gain a better understanding of the direction for the advanced certification, survey respondents were asked to identify the top two criteria that should be required of therapeutic massage professionals before being permitted to pursue an advanced certification. The top three choices were to meet the current 500-hour certification requirements plus continuing education, to have a current NCBTMB certification, or to have years of experience in the field (see Figure 13).

Figure 13: Bar Chart of Respondents' Highest Ranked Prerequisites for Advanced Certification



Respondents were split evenly on whether the advanced certification exam should include a hands-on evaluation component (N=2,582) or not (N=2,601). Figure 14 provides a pie chart showing the percentage of respondents by hands-on evaluation opinion.

Figure 14: Pie Chart of Respondents' Opinion as to the Need for a Hands-on Evaluation Component

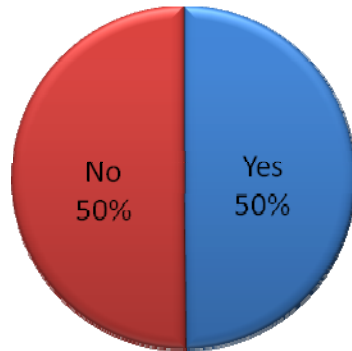
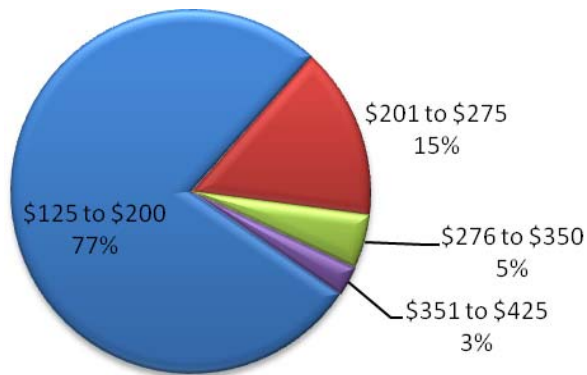


Figure 15 provides the outcomes of the question pertaining to the cost of an advanced certification. Over three-fourths (N=3,922) of those who responded indicated that the initial cost to obtain the advanced certification should be minimized. These respondents selected the option for \$125-\$200, the lowest price range that they were presented.

Figure 15: Pie Chart of Respondents' Anticipated Cost for an Advanced Certification



Conclusion

This Needs Assessment Survey was given to individuals in the therapeutic massage and bodywork professions to clarify the need for developing an advanced practitioner certification, define what makes an advanced practitioner and to elicit feedback on the characteristics and criteria associated with an advanced certification.

The professional characteristics of survey participants covered a wide variety of experiences in the field and included 4,797 individuals that identified themselves as advanced practitioners. The following conclusions can be derived from the data:

- The amount of education and years of experience were the most important factors in defining an individual to be an advanced practitioner.
- Over half of the respondents felt that the certification should pertain to an advanced set of knowledge and skills as opposed to being focused on a specific modality or setting.
- Respondents indicated that the practice settings with the greatest need for an advanced certification were a *Traditional Healthcare Setting* and an *Integrated Healthcare Setting*.
- Cancer Massage was identified as the modality with the greatest need for an advanced certification.
- The most identified pre-requisites for pursuing an advanced certification included current entry-level certification, additional education, and additional experience.
- The respondents were equally divided as to whether or not the certification should include a hands-on component.
- The vast majority of respondents believe that the cost to become certified should be minimized by keeping it under \$200.