

## **Japanese Massage hits Miami**

AAMT Members in Queensland had a once only opportunity to meet Noriko Hirohashi and discovered the application and principles of Japanese Traditional Massage (Anma).

Noriko contacted AAMT, and with only a week to get a workshop organised, over thirty patriotic members attended from as far away as Toowoomba. Noriko is the current massage instructor/trainer for the Japanese Olympic Committee “Tukuba University of Technology” as well as Massage instructor at the National Rehabilitation Centre for the Disabled. The following information was provided at the session.

Massage is always very common in Japan. To prevent injury and keep student’s level of education high, the Ministry of Health and Welfare supervises the massage school. As the minimum education, we have to study 3 years full time in the massage school. Total lesson contact time is approximately 2,500 hours excluding work experience.

Then students must pass the national examination to become a qualified professional massage therapist. The Diploma means only embarking in the path of study, if one ceases studying, one may not be able to claim professional status.

Anma is traditional Japanese massage. It has evolved its’ own style throughout a long history, since the introduction from China around 6th Century AD. An is a Japanese term for applying pressure, Ma is the term for stroking. Anma uses a variety of manual techniques such as stroking, kneading, tapping and pressure on acupuncture points. The aim of Anma is the maintenance of health and prevention of disease. Anma can have mental and emotional effects by inducing a deep sense of relaxation.

Anma was introduced to Japan from China through Korea in the 6th century A.D. The official medical system was instituted and then Anma, Acupuncture and Moxibusion were adopted as the official healing system in the court under Taiho code in 701A.D. Over the years, there had been other contacts between China and Japan, but in general , they remained separated from one another and there was little communication between the two countries. That is also why Anma developed differently in Japan.

In 1911 the government began the certificate system. In 1992 the examination for the License of Anma was raised to the status of a national examination and the Minister of Health and Welfare now issues the license. An applicant is required to have completed 2,550 hours.

Studies cover anatomy, physiology, pathology, hygiene, clinical medicine, oriental medicine, related laws and regulations, as well as practical training for at least three years at a special training college or institution after finishing high school.

In Anma the patient is fully dressed and receives treatment indirectly over the clothing while in western massage the treatment is given directly on to the skin. When Anma was introduced to Japan it first came into fashion among the upper classes. The practitioner, being probably from a lower class, felt uncomfortable touching the patient directly, and so treating indirectly through the clothing made easier. This method is still in use today.

Anma also has the unique method of covering the patient's head above the hairline with a Tenugui cloth . This is because the Japanese had large and sometimes delicate hairstyles that obstructed the practitioner's hands; covering made hygienic sense also.

Massaging centrifugally, from the heart towards the tip of the limbs differs from the Western massage movement, which works centripetally, from the tip of the limbs toward heart, which is considered effective to improve the venous blood flow.

Anma is performed centrifugally, that is, massaged from the heart outwards to limbs. The reason for the centrifugal movement was that this method did not lift the Kimono and embarrass both the patient and the practitioner. In Anma the seated, the side lying, the prone and the supine position are used in the treatment.

The seated position is the most appropriate for an unskilled trainee. In this position the bones are easily touched through the skin and tense muscles and stiffness are easily recognized. This position is also used for the now trendy Quick Massage technique usually given at a patient's workstation.

The side lying position is often used for whole body treatment. as the muscles are relaxed in this position and it is possible to give treatment without stimulating the body too strongly. The prone position is used for the neck, the shoulder, the back and the hips. It is useful when finishing off the back of the legs. The supine position is rarely used, apart from the Anpuku treatment (abdomen), giving extra treatment to the face and the limbs and also when treating a bedridden patient.

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