

Introduction

As a manual therapist, you have invested considerable time and effort in training and work experience to become a professional in a demanding and rewarding healthcare field. Developing an injury as a result of your work can stall or even threaten the career you have worked so hard to create. *Save Your Hands!* provides the comprehensive information and proven methods you need to prevent injury, protect your investment in your career, and safeguard your health.

Save Your Hands! addresses the injury prevention concerns of massage therapists and bodyworkers, physical, occupational, and hand therapists, chiropractors, osteopaths, nurses and athletic trainers—in fact, any practitioner who performs hands-on treatments. Manual practitioners can encounter symptoms or injury at any stage of their career, even during their training. If you are a student, *Save Your Hands!* can help you understand why and how injury happens, and show you how to develop good injury prevention habits and practices from the very start. For professionals, this book offers a comprehensive reference and practical guide you can refer to throughout your career, as your circumstances change and you encounter challenges that could increase your injury risk and cause symptoms to arise. Students and professionals alike will find a wealth of helpful tips and practical advice they can use every day to help them effectively manage the emotional and physical demands of their work.

Preventing injury to your upper extremities, neck and back is the main goal of *Save Your Hands!* As manual therapists know from their own experiences with clients, it is certainly easier and more effective to prevent injuries from happening than to treat them once they have

already occurred. One of the keys to prevention is to be fully aware of the injury risks you will face in the course of your career. You will find a thorough explanation of these risks in Part One of this book. The other key is to have effective strategies in place to deal with those risks. Part Two presents a multi-faceted plan of action, using methods that have been proven effective in preventing injury. Ergonomics is an essential part of this holistic approach to maintaining your health, and it is an important new focus of the second edition of *Save Your Hands!* By studying the workplace to find ways to take best advantage of your strengths, ergonomics provides powerful tools you can use to reduce injury risk as a result of your work.

It is also possible, despite your best efforts, to find yourself developing symptoms; after all, who hasn't had aches and pains after a particularly hard day at work? How will you know when those symptoms signal that it is time to seek treatment, and which treatments work best for the injuries manual therapists most frequently encounter? In Part Three, you will learn about the typical symptoms and most common conditions manual therapists experience, get an overview of effective treatment options, and understand the steps to take to keep symptoms from developing into chronic and possibly debilitating conditions.

Several appendices are included at the end of the book to further assist you in your prevention efforts. Massage schools and spas will find helpful recommendations in appendices written especially for them. In addition, the *Save Your Hands!* Web site at www.SaveYourHands.com has been designed to be used in conjunction with the book. It is regularly updated with the latest news, information and links and includes a wide variety of injury prevention and treatment resources. There will also be opportunities on the site to share injury prevention tips, experiences with injury and treatment, and favorite resources with your fellow manual therapists.

The message of *Save Your Hands!* is simple: there is a great deal you can do to protect yourself from work-related injury. Reading and proactively applying the information you find in these pages will help you develop an injury prevention strategy that works for you. In doing so, you will be taking an important step toward protecting your health and well-being in your career as a manual therapist.