



Asian Bodywork Therapy (ABT)

A. The **United States Department of Education** recognizes Asian Bodywork Therapy as a distinct profession. The US DOE Classification of Instructional Programs lists separate definitions for Asian Bodywork Therapy (item #51.3502) and Massage Therapy (item #51.3501). For US DOE definitions, see page 369 at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2002/2002165.pdf>.

B. **AOBTA®** and **NCCAOM** are two national organizations upholding national standards for Asian Bodywork Therapy:

1. The American Organization for Bodywork Therapies of Asia (AOBTA®) creates and upholds educational and ethical standards for ABTs, supports minimum standards of competence by qualifying its members' educational training, and verifies that its members have satisfied those standards through a peer review procedure. AOBTA is an organizational member of NOCA (National Organization for Competency Assurance) and offers an assessment-based certification for professional level membership, with additional requirements for instructor levels. More information about AOBTA membership requirements and certification levels can be obtained from its website, www.aobta.org.
2. The National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM) establishes, assesses and promotes recognized standards of competence and safety in acupuncture and Oriental medicine (which includes Asian Bodywork Therapy) for the protection and benefit of the public. The NCCAOM developed and administers a national certification exam for ABT. Passing the ABT Exam earns the designation "Diplomate in Asian Bodywork Therapy (NCCAOM)." All of NCCAOM's certification programs are accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) of the National Organization for Competency Assurance (NOCA). More information on NCCAOM and its certification programs can be obtained from its website, www.nccaom.org.

C. In Massachusetts, cities and towns may license Asian Bodywork Therapy through their own Health Department or appropriate agency, requiring that licensee's hold a current certification and/or membership from either:

1. **AOBTA® (American Organization for Bodywork Therapies of Asia, as an:** AOBTA®-Certified Practitioner [AOBTA®-CP]; AOBTA®-Registered Instructor [AOBTA®-RI]; or AOBTA®-Certified Instructor [AOBTA®-CI], **or**
2. **NCCAOM (National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine) as a:** Diplomate in Asian Bodywork Therapy (NCCAOM) [Dipl., ABT (NCCAOM)].

Currently the only city in the state of Massachusetts to provide a local license for practices excluded from the state massage license is the city of Cambridge.

Codes of Ethics and Grievance Procedures

Both the AOBTA and the NCCAOM have a professional code of ethics and grievance procedure which can be accessed on their websites. These standards are applicable to all of each one's current members (AOBTA) or Certified Diplomates (NCCAOM).

AOBTA's Definition of Asian Bodywork Therapy (ABT)

Asian Bodywork Therapy (ABT) is the treatment of the human body/mind/spirit, including the electromagnetic or energetic field which surrounds, infuses and brings that body to life, by using pressure and/or manipulation. Asian Bodywork is based upon Chinese Medical principles for assessing and evaluating the body's energetic system. It uses traditional Asian techniques and treatment strategies to primarily affect and balance the energetic system for the purpose of treating the human body, emotions, mind, energy field and spirit for the promotion, maintenance and restoration of health.

ABT Scope of Practice

Methods of assessment and evaluation may include the Chinese Four Pillars of examination: observation, listening, asking and touching. Assessments are based primarily on Chinese Medicine parameters relating to the balance and circulation of the Five Essential Substances: Qi, Jing, Shen, Xue, Jin-ye.

ABT is one of the three branches of Chinese Medicine nationally certified for professional practice through exams created by the National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM). ABT Qi assessment and treatment may include, but is not limited to: touching, stretching, pressing or holding meridians (channels of Qi) and/or acupoints, primarily with the hands. Appropriately trained practitioners may also use external application of medicinal plants, heat or cold; dietary and exercise suggestions; cupping; gua sha; moxibustion and other Asian-based techniques or practices.

ABT Educational Requirements

(Certified Practitioner, Registered Instructor, and Certified Instructor) are required to have completed at least 500 hours training.

500-Hour Curriculum Overview:

160 Hours Asian Bodywork Theory and Practice

100 Hours Traditional Chinese Medical Theory

70 Hours Observed Clinical Practice

100 Hours Western Anatomy & Physiology

70 Hours Other (Electives must include business, legal & ethical considerations, contraindications, first aid and CPR. May include Tai Chi, Qigong and other topics relative to ABT practices.)

Registered Instructors and Certified Instructors must meet additional requirements.

ABT Forms and Titles

The AOBTA® uses the term “Form” to differentiate different kinds of Asian Bodywork Therapy, which we have been able to identify as specific and distinct.

All Forms that are defined here originally had their roots in Chinese Medicine. Over the centuries practitioners in China, Japan, Thailand, Korea and more recently, North America and Europe have changed and evolved these forms into separate and distinct modalities. The AOBTA® accepts all forms of Asian Bodywork Therapy that meet our professional curriculum standards. Many of our members may simply identify themselves as practicing Shiatsu, Amma, or Medical Qigong, which are foundational forms of Asian Bodywork Therapy. Since these forms vary so much depending on the lineage, it is difficult finding one definition that is applicable to all. Practitioners create their own style definition of themselves and their work as it accurately applies to them, derived from the recognized forms.

Criteria for an Asian Bodywork Therapy Form to be listed in AOBTA Literature

1. The Form must have its foundation in Chinese Medicine.
2. The Form must have a program of instruction that meets the professional level membership requirements of the AOBTA curriculum.
3. The Form must have clearly defined theories and techniques of treatment that, although founded in Chinese Medicine Theory, are unique and which distinguish it from other forms of treatment.
4. The Form must have origin of lineage or textual, canonical knowledge.
5. The Form must have at least 20 graduates, which include practitioners and instructors of said form, who are professional level AOBTA members.
6. The Form must have a written definition.

As of April 2009, the following Asian Bodywork Therapy Forms are listed on the AOBTA website. More forms may be added in the future, according to the above criteria.

- Acupressure
- Amma
- AMMA Therapy®
- Chi Nei Tsang
- Five Element Shiatsu
- Integrative Eclectic Shiatsu
- Japanese Shiatsu
- Jin Shin Do® Bodymind Acupressure®
- Jin Shou Tuina™
- Macrobiotic Shiatsu

- Medical Qigong
- Nuad Bo ‘Rarn (Traditional Thai Bodywork)
- Shiatsu
- Shiatsu Anma Therapy
- Tuina
- Zen Shiatsu

Acupressure

Acupressure is a system of balancing the body’s energy by applying pressure to specific acupoints to release tension and increase circulation. The many hands-on methods of stimulating the acupressure points can strengthen weaknesses, relieve common ailments, prevent health disorders and restore the body’s vital life force.

Amma

Amma; Derived from “Anma” in China, classic Korean Asian bodywork is called Amma. The name “Am-ma” literally translates to “push-pull.” Amma is a specialized form of skilled (somatic) touch therapy that combines deep tissue bodywork with the application of pressure, friction, and touch to specific acu-points, superficial primary and tendino-muscle energy channels, muscles, ligaments, and joints. It is rooted in the fundamental principles of Chinese Medicine, focusing on the balance and movement of Qi (energy) within the body. The techniques of Amma aim to remove blockages and free the flow of Qi in the body — restoring, promoting, and maintaining optimum health. Amma practitioners are also trained the principles of wholistic nutrition and eastern dietary principles.

AMMA Therapy®

AMMA Therapy® is a highly refined and complex system of bodywork therapy utilizing techniques and treatment strategies combining the use of Chinese Medicine principles for assessing and evaluating general imbalances in the energetic system and a Western approach to organ dysfunctions. AMMA Therapy® restores, promotes and maintains optimum health through the treatment of the physical body, the bio-energy, and the emotions, which reflect and are bound into the neuromuscular system. AMMA Therapy® has proven to be an effective healing modality used to treat a wide range of medical conditions. The treatment includes the use of dietary therapy, herbs, nutritional supplements, and the external application of herbal preparations. This method was created by Tina Sohn.

Chi Nei Tsang

Chi Nei Tsang is an entire system of Chinese deep healing that makes use of the energy flow of the five major systems in the body: vascular, lymphatic, nervous, tendon/muscle, and acupuncture meridians. With this practice one is able to increase the energy flow to specific organs through massaging a series of points in the navel area. Chi Nei Tsang frees the energy blockages in the navel and then guides the healing light energy into other parts of the body. Chi Nei Tsang was brought to America by Master Mantak Chia.

Jin Shin Do® Bodymind Acupressure®

Jin Shin Do® combines gentle yet deep finger pressure on acupoints with simple body focusing techniques to help release physical and emotional tension. It promotes a pleasurable trance state during which the recipients can get in touch with their body and access feelings or emotions related to their physical condition. This body-mind approach is a unique synthesis of a traditional Japanese acupressure technique, classical Chinese acupuncture theory, Taoist philosophy, breathing methods, and Reichian segmental theory. Jin Shin Do® Bodymind Acupressure® was developed by Iona Marsaa Teegarden, Psychotherapist.

Jin Shou Tuina™

Jin Shou Tuina™ is the method of tuina practiced and taught by the North American Tang Shou Tao Association (NATSTA). Diagnosis and treatment are based in the tenets of Traditional Chinese medicine. Manual therapy techniques range from very soft energetic work, to deep and vigorous manipulation to appropriately affect soft tissue, structural alignment and the meridian systems. Adjunctive therapies such as moxibustion, cupping and external herbal applications are also utilized as needed. Jin Shou Tuina developed out of the internal martial art traditions of China and personal development through commitment to gong fu physical culture is seen as fundamental to the process of becoming an adept practitioner.

Medical Qigong

Medical Qigong, an ancient branch of Chinese Medicine, has existed for several thousand years. Like Acupuncture and Tuina therapies, Medical Qigong is based on meridian and point theory, as well as ancient Chinese philosophy. Medical Qigong refers to a wide series of therapeutic methods, including but not limited to: breath training, psychosomatic exercises, meditation, and guided visualization that direct the practitioners to create a place of health and balance in their clients. Medical Qigong practitioners are trained in Qi transference and replenishment to be used as a healing art different from self-Qigong exercises taught for personal use.

Nuad Bo ‘Rarn (Traditional Thai Bodywork)

Nuad Bo Rarn is the traditional Thai medical bodywork form. Thai bodywork is based upon an integration of Indian Buddhist medicine and Traditional Chinese Medicine. Thai bodywork utilizes hand techniques and a unique approach to passive movement and stretching in order to open up the veins or energy passages and release chronic tension from the body. Nuad Bo Rarn incorporates a spiritual dimension in its gentle and focused approach to ABT.

Shiatsu

Shiatsu is a Japanese word for finger pressure: “Shi” meaning finger, and “Atsu” meaning pressure.

Five Element Shiatsu

The primary emphasis of Five Element Shiatsu is to identify a pattern of disharmony through use of the four pillars of examinations and to harmonize that pattern with an appropriate treatment plan. Hands-on techniques and preferences for assessment varies with the practitioner, depending on their individual background and training. The radial pulse usually provides the most critical and detailed information. Palpation of the back and/or abdomen and a detailed verbal history serve to confirm the assessment. Considerations of the client’s lifestyle, emotional, and psychological factors are all considered important. Although this approach uses the paradigm of the five elements to tonify, sedate, or control patterns of disharmony, practitioners of this style also consider hot or cold and internal or external symptoms and signs.

Integrative Eclectic Shiatsu

Integrative Eclectic Shiatsu utilizes Japanese Shiatsu techniques, Chinese Medicine theory and Western methods of soft tissue manipulation. Dietary and herbal methods are also included to create a comprehensive integrated treatment method.

Japanese Shiatsu

Shiatsu literally means finger (Shi) pressure (Atsu) and although Shiatsu is primarily pressure, usually applied with the thumbs along the meridian lines, extensive soft tissue manipulation and both active and passive exercise and stretching may be part of the treatments. Extensive use of cutaneovisceral reflexes in the abdomen and on the back are also characteristics of Shiatsu. The emphasis of Shiatsu is the treatment of the whole meridian; however, effective points are also used. The therapist assesses the condition of the patient’s body as treatment progresses. Therapy and diagnosis are one.

Macrobiotic Shiatsu

Founded by Shizuko Yamamoto and based on George Ohsawa’s philosophy that each individual is an integral part of nature, Macrobiotic Shiatsu supports a natural lifestyle and heightened instincts for improving health. Assessments are through visual, verbal, and touch techniques (including pulses) and the Five Transformations.

Treatment involves non-invasive touch and pressure using hand and barefoot techniques and stretches to facilitate the flow of Qi and to strengthen the body-mind. Dietary guidance, medicinal plant foods, breathing techniques and home remedies are emphasized. Corrective exercises, postural rebalancing, palm healing, self-shiatsu, and Qigong are included in Macrobiotic Shiatsu.

Shiatsu Anma Therapy

Shiatsu Anma Therapy utilizes a unique blending of two of the most popular Asian bodywork forms practiced in Japan. Dr. Kaneko introduces traditional Anma Therapy® based on the energetic systems of Traditional Chinese Medicine in long form and contemporary pressure therapy which is based on neuro-musculoskeletal system in short form. Ampuku, abdominal bodywork therapy, is another foundation in his school.

Zen Shiatsu

Zen Shiatsu is characterized by the theory of Kyo-Jitsu, its physical and psychological manifestations, and its application to abdominal (Hara) diagnosis. Zen Shiatsu theory is based on an extended meridian system that includes, as well as expands, the location of the traditional acupuncture meridians. The focus of a Zen Shiatsu session is on the use of meridian lines rather than on specific points. In addition, Zen Shiatsu does not adhere to a fixed sequence or set of methods that are applied to all similar client needs. It utilizes appropriate methods for the unique pattern of each individual. Zen Shiatsu was developed by Shizuto Masunaga.

Tuina

Tuina is a method of Chinese bodywork characterized by the smooth gliding or rolling movements of the hands and arms. Through Tui (push) and na (grasp), kneading, pressing, rolling, shaking, and stretching of the body, acupoints are opened and qi flow is realigned in the musculo-tendon meridians. Tuina techniques are used to treat a wide variety of musculoskeletal and internal organ disorders by opening stagnant meridian channels and encouraging the flow of qi into deficient areas. Tuina utilizes Chinese Medicine theory in assessing energetic and functional disorders. In addition, the use of external herbal medicines and therapeutic exercise is also included.