

36 Whitman Street
North Adams, MA 01247

May 6, 2011

Ruth Blodgett
Senior Vice President, Planning & Development
Berkshire Health Systems
725 North Street
Pittsfield, MA 01201

Dear Ms. Blodgett:

My name is Todd Fiorentino and I am a licensed massage therapist with seven years experience and a teaching background. I currently run Energy Rising Massage Therapy, a practice on North Street in Pittsfield, and prior to that I ran the massage therapy program at Mildred Elley. (Our students used to do chair massage for BMC staff nearby the cafeteria.)

I am writing to you today to propose an Integrative Therapies Department at BMC that would work in conjunction with the Brien Center. Such departments have been run successfully nationwide; Southwestern Vermont Medical Center operated one for a period of years before it lost funding. There is high demand for this service among patients, and it would assist in a wide variety of cases.

Most recently, in the news, there has been widespread attention to the problem of prescription drug abuse. And a number of patients will not opt for spinal surgery or other surgeries even though they are still in pain. I see various clients now who have completed physical therapy, but still have lingering symptoms. I also see headache, post-stroke, nerve impingement and whole host of other cases that really belong in a hospital environment.

There is great cross-over between massage therapy and your Physical Medicine Department—from Physical Therapists to Psychiatrists to Doctors of Osteopathy to Neurologists and Pain Specialists/Anesthesiologists, we could be working together. I read a case study about a group of MD's who went to China and observed surgery done only with acupuncture needles for anesthesia. The patient was allergic to standard drugs used to kill pain.

There is excellent data showing the scientific basis for massage. Sources such as the National Institute of Health and Touch Research Institute have documented in numerous studies the benefits for anxiety, depression, addiction, musculoskeletal dysfunction, insomnia, pregnancy, sports injuries and so on. It is a licensed profession with a standard curriculum; all LMT's must carry insurance.

I believe there is great potential to develop such a program here in the Berkshires. I understand there is a pain clinic of physiatrists at Hillcrest and a Pain Management Initiative, but I am not aware of any concerted effort to bring in complementary approaches. I would welcome the opportunity to talk with

your Marketing or Development departments to explore fundraising and promotion assuming that BMC has an interest. I am also available to make board presentations or provide other input.

If you are in a strategic planning phase now, and you haven't yet considered expanding wellness, prevention and integrative therapies, please do. This is a national movement. In Washington state, LMT's work side-by-side with nurses and doctors. In Albany, when I pursued a second level of advanced training, two of my teachers worked in a hospital environment. This is happening right now.

I was solicited to join an insurance network last year, but declined. This year, I have submitted paperwork to join MVP's network of providers. I currently bill for personal injury cases and there is the potential to invoice for workman's compensation claims. The insurance companies are designing programs to reimburse for therapeutic massage -- with a doctor's prescription -- as the customer demand is strong.

Thank you for considering this idea. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Todd Fiorentino, LMT
732-595-6064

cc: Catherine A. Doherty, M.Ed., Chief Executive Officer, The Brien Center, P.O. Box 4219, Pittsfield, MA 01202-4219