



Introducing Hayley Moeller – ACT Facilitator

I adore being an Oncology Massage Therapist, and I really feel as though I have found the best job on this planet! I did kind of “fall into” this work though, rather than seeking it out. Whilst my children were babies, and I was a stay-at-home mum, I sought out massage training (“to give my brain something to do”). I became hooked, and went on to gain my Diploma in Remedial Massage. However, all throughout my massage training I was always drawn to the nurturing side of massage - and for me, Remedial Massage really wasn’t my cup of tea.

After I graduated, I ran my own business from home. A little while after, a massage colleague happened to mention that she needed someone to take her place massaging at our local Hospice here in Canberra. Well, me knowing absolutely nothing about Palliative Care, thought I’d give it a go! I had been touched by death very early on in my life, losing my Mum when I was 10 years old, and I’ve always been a little scared of death and dying. I learnt from a young age that unfortunately bad things happen to good people. I felt this was a chance to confront my fears and perhaps do a little bit of healing. Who could have known where this opportunity was going to lead me!

That first day I arrived at the Hospice to work alongside, and learn from my colleague – I almost didn’t continue through the front doors! The smell, sorrow and fear felt like it flowed out the doors, but I challenged myself to at least see the day out and what it involved. That day changed my life, and it was the beginning of a long journey for me to learn that death and dying is a special part of life, not to be feared. It taught me that it can be done beautifully, and indeed that massage therapy plays a very special part of this journey.

That first day, we worked with a young man in his late 30’s – probably only hours from death. We spent about 20mins with him. He was very fearful and agitated. When I saw what a profound affect the touch of our nurturing hands made to this young man’s dying – I knew then, that this work was special. I felt that this work had purpose. This day was the beginning of a very special 6 year association of me working as part of the massage team at the Canberra Hospice. This included doing many home visits over the years and working with carers and whole families. I learnt so many lessons week in, week out and I am so thankful for my years of work there. I saw the profound effect that OM could have on so many illnesses and in particular Motor Neurone Disease. I also learnt that the Hospice was not a place to be feared, and in fact it’s rooms and halls

contained much laughter and joy. I feel privileged to have been part of so many family's journeys at such a difficult time.

It stirred a desire in me to learn more and to share the knowledge I had learnt. Whilst working out in the community I realised there was very little understanding of what Palliative Care was. This led me to complete all 4 modules of Oncology Massage Training. I also realized the need for more in-depth knowledge in Lymphoedema and completed my training in Complex Lymphatic Therapies.

A shoulder injury resulting in surgery in 2010, caused me to re-assess my working life. I adored what I was doing, and was worried that I would have to give it up. Then the opportunity to train as a teacher with Oncology Massage came up, and I was so excited. Here was the chance for me to marry my hands-on experience with teaching and share the knowledge. So I completed my teacher training, and am now the OM Facilitator for Canberra and the ACT. This has been the perfect combination for me to keep my passion for this kind of work alive. I absolutely love sharing knowledge and training therapists how to work safely with oncology patients.

Recent events in my family have challenged me again, and I have been able to use all the knowledge I have learnt through OM to help with some challenging health issues. Our OM skills can be used for many illnesses and most importantly I have learnt how important our own self-care is. I have also learnt that many illnesses don't have the "backing" that cancer does, and I am keen to see that these illnesses are spoken about and advocated for – especially for those patients that don't feel they have a voice. I have also experienced first hand how difficult our health system is to navigate – and how important it is to find the right health professionals for you.

I am so thankful to be part of a wonderful team of OM therapists and to be able to share what I have learned over the years. I live with my ever-supportive Hubby, daughter aged 17 and son aged 15. Our house is also ruled by 2 German Shorthair Pointer dogs.