

# **Inter-Jurisdictional Entry-to-Practice Competency Profile for Massage Therapists**

**Developed by the Consortium of Massage Therapy Regulators**  
**With financial support from Human Resources and Skills Development Canada**

**College of Massage Therapists of British Columbia**  
**College of Massage Therapists of Newfoundland & Labrador**  
**College of Massage Therapists of Ontario**  
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### **Purpose of the Competency Profile**

The Competency Profile was developed in 2009-10 by the regulatory bodies for Massage Therapists in Canada:

- The College of Massage Therapists of British Columbia, CMTBC
- The College of Massage Therapists of Newfoundland and Labrador, CMTNL
- The College of Massage Therapists of Ontario, CMTO

Its purpose is to create a common, inter-jurisdictional entry-to-practice standard, reflective of the uniformity of Massage Therapy practice in the regulated provinces. An inter-jurisdictional standard will facilitate labour mobility in the profession, and assist provinces who may, in the future, initiate regulation of Massage Therapists.

The entry-to-practice Competency Profile defines the minimum expectations of newly-registered Massage Therapists who are entering practice for the first time. The set of Practice Competencies listed in the Profile should be viewed as an array of abilities that newly-registered Massage Therapists bring to their workplace, upon which they draw as needed, dependent upon their practice setting.

The Competency Profile has been created with the intention of ensuring that newly-registered Massage Therapists can practice safely, effectively and ethically, and that they have a foundation upon which to develop breadth and depth in the profession through experience and further education.

The Practice Competencies describe job functions that Massage Therapists may be called upon to carry out. As such, they do not speak directly to the requirements for competency assessment, or education. These critical expectations (which we call Performance Indicators) will be developed later, once the Competency Profile moves toward implementation.

### **Foundational Knowledge**

It is understood entry-level Massage Therapists bring to the workplace, and apply to their performance of Practice Competencies, a comprehensive foundational knowledge relevant to Massage Therapy practice, in the following areas:

- Anatomy
- Physiology
- Pathophysiology
- Pharmacology
- Kinesiology
- Nutrition

Performance Indicators for foundational knowledge will be developed later, once the Competency Profile moves toward implementation.

## **Development of the Competency Profile**

The Competency Profile was developed by a project team made up of representatives of the regulators, supported by a consultant. The Practice Competencies were drawn from the previous regulatory standards:

- Occupational Competency Profile, 2008, CMTBC
- Massage Therapy Competency Standards, 2006, CMTO

The Practice Competencies were validated by means of a survey of Registered Massage Therapists (RMTs) in British Columbia, Ontario, and Newfoundland & Labrador. The survey confirmed that Massage Therapy practice is indeed common across these provinces, and that RMTs have a very similar opinions of what should be the entry-to-practice competency requirements.

While in draft form, the Practice Competencies were reviewed in a workshop that included representatives of Massage Therapy professional associations and educators from across Canada. The resulting recommendations were incorporated by the project team into the final document.

## **Definitions**

We define a Practice Competency as:

*a description of a task which is performed in practice, and which can be carried out to a specified level of proficiency*

We define Entry-Level Proficiency as:

*the proficiency required of newly-registered Massage Therapists in order to practice safely, effectively and ethically, which has the following characteristics:*

- *When presented with routine situations, the entry-level Massage Therapist applies relevant competencies in a manner consistent with generally accepted standards in the profession, without supervision or direction, and within a reasonable timeframe. The Massage Therapist selects and applies competencies in an informed manner. The Massage Therapist anticipates what outcomes to expect in a given situation, and responds appropriately.*
- *The entry-level Massage Therapist recognizes unusual, difficult to resolve and complex situations which may be beyond their capacity. The Massage Therapist takes appropriate and ethical steps to address these situations, that may include seeking consultation, supervision or mentorship, reviewing research literature, or a making referral.*

**Philosophy and Assumptions Inherent in the Competency Profile**

- The Competency Profile defines the minimum requirement for newly-registered Massage Therapists who are entering practice for the first time, in order to ensure their ability to practice in a manner that is safe, effective and ethical. The attainment at entry-to-practice of additional competencies, and higher levels of proficiency, is to be encouraged.
- The performance of a Practice Competency requires application of a combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes and judgments.
- A Massage Therapist's Level of Proficiency in performing any Practice Competency will, in general, develop over time based upon experience and ongoing learning.
- The Competency Profile may be viewed as an array of abilities that newly-registered Massage Therapists bring to their workplace, upon which they can draw as necessary, dependent upon the needs of their practice setting. Massage Therapists will apply relevant competencies in a manner consistent with the context of their practice setting. Some competencies will not be applicable in certain practice settings.
- The Practice Competencies in the Competency Profile are interdependent, each competency informing and qualifying each other competency. Competencies are not intended to be applied in isolation.
- The Competency Profile is constructed in an easy-to-understand and user-friendly format, to serve users both within and outside the profession. It uses plain, generic language, and as far as possible, non-technical terminology.
- The Competency Profile will be used (if approved and implemented by the regulators) to identify Performance Indicators for competency assessment, and for education.
- The Competency Profile will be reviewed and updated over time, to reflect changes in practice.

## **Organizational Framework**

The Competency Profile contains 150 Practice Competencies organized into the following areas:

### **1. Professional Practice**

- 1.1 Communication
- 1.2 Professional Conduct
- 1.3 Therapeutic Relationship

### **2. Assessment and Treatment Planning**

- 2.1 Assessment
- 2.2 Treatment Planning
- 2.3 Indications for Adjunctive Therapeutic Modalities

### **3. Treatment and Patient Self-Care**

- 3.1 Treatment Principles
- 3.2 Modalities and Techniques
  - 3.2.a Massage Skills
  - 3.2.b Myofascial Techniques
  - 3.2.c Therapeutic Exercise
  - 3.2.d Joint Mobilization
  - 3.2.e Thermal Therapy

**Complexities of the Practice Competencies**

As an aid to education and assessment, the level of complexity applicable to each Practice Competency is identified in each of three Domains of Learning, using the definitions below.

<b>Domain</b>	<b>Complexity</b>	<b>Descriptor</b>
<b>Cognitive (knowledge and thinking skills)</b>		
	Level 0	Domain not applicable
	Level 1	Remember information
	Level 2	Comprehend & apply information
	Level 3	Analyze and interpret information
	Level 4	Synthesize (create new) information
<b>Psychomotor (physical actions that require neuromuscular coordination)</b>		
	Level 0	Domain not applicable
	Level 1	Perform simple patterns and tasks
	Level 2	Perform complex patterns and tasks; make minor adjustments based upon outcome
	Level 3	Adapt tasks to new situations
	Level 4	Develop new tasks
<b>Affective (beliefs and values that affect cognitive and psychomotor activity)</b>		
	Level 0	Domain not applicable
	Level 1	Recognize, and respond within, a required system of beliefs and values
	Level 2	Choose (prefer) to function within a particular system of beliefs and values
	Level 3	Internalize a system of beliefs and values and instinctively function within it

At entry-level, we do not expect functioning at cognitive level 4, psychomotor level 4, or affective level 3.

These definitions are derived from the classic work of Bloom (1956), and others, but are unique to this document.

### **Competency Assessment Environments for Educational Programs**

Completion of an educational program in Massage Therapy is an important prerequisite to registration. Because the scope of competency assessment in a registration examination is necessarily limited, regulators need assurance on the nature of competency assessment that has taken place during education.

Educational programs in Massage Therapy are expected to include:

- Academic education which takes place in a classroom or through guided independent study, in which students develop knowledge and thinking skills, and beliefs and values, which enable them to demonstrate relevant competencies. Assessment of academic education must take place through written and / or oral examinations designed to determine proficiency based upon the criterion in the table below.
- Practical education, in which students work directly with an experienced practitioner and a simulated patient, to develop hands-on abilities which enable them to demonstrate relevant competencies. Assessment of practical education must take place through practical examinations designed to determine proficiency based upon the criterion in the table below.
- Clinical education, in which students work directly with patients in a setting designed to provide patient care. Students must be supervised throughout their clinical education, in a manner that facilitates their development of clinical abilities while ensuring that patient care is safe, effective and ethical. Assessment of relevant competencies must take place in a manner designed to determine proficiency based upon the criterion in the table below.

<b>Assessment Environment</b>	<b>Criterion for Success</b>
Academic, A	Performance consistent with the definition of Entry-Level Proficiency in an academic assessment environment (such as a written or oral examination)
Simulated, S	Repeated and reliable performance consistent with the definition of Entry-Level Proficiency in a simulated environment (such as utilizing a mannequin, model or simulated patient)
Clinical, C	Repeated and reliable performance consistent with the definition of Entry-Level Proficiency in a clinical environment with a variety of patients

Competencies must be evaluated by educational programs in the identified Assessment Environment(s). Programs may be called upon to demonstrate to regulators that prior to graduation they assess student performance in this manner.

# Inter-Jurisdictional Competency Profile Massage Therapy

## Practice Competencies

Practice Competency		Domain & Level			Educational Assessment Environment		
		Cognitive	Psychomotor	Affective	Academic	Simulated	Clinical
<b>1. Professional Practice</b>							
<b>1.1</b>	<b>Communication</b>						
a	Utilize effective written communication.	2	1	0	✓	✓	
b	Utilize effective oral communication.	2	1	1	✓	✓	
c	Utilize effective electronic communication.	2	2	0	✓	✓	
d	Communicate in a manner that respects diversity.	2	0	2	✓	✓	
e	Communicate in a manner that is suitable to the recipient's understanding and background.	2	0	2	✓	✓	✓
f	Utilize active listening skills.	2	2	1	✓	✓	✓
g	Utilize and respond to non-verbal communication.	2	2	1	✓	✓	✓
h	Contribute to an effective, collaborative atmosphere in group settings.	2	2	2	✓	✓	
i	Utilize medical terminology.	1	0	0	✓	✓	✓
j	Establish and maintain inter-professional collaboration.	2	0	2	✓		
k	Identify and address personal and interpersonal sources of conflict.	3	0	2	✓	✓	
<b>1.2</b>	<b>Professional Conduct</b>						
a	Comply with federal and provincial requirements.	2	0	0	✓		
b	Comply with regulatory requirements.	2	0	0	✓		
c	Comply with municipal and local requirements.	2	0	0	✓		
d	Practice professionally, independent of personal beliefs.	2	0	2	✓	✓	✓
e	Employ personal care and lifestyle strategies that enhance professional effectiveness.	2	1	2	✓		
f	Manage personal stress.	2	2	2	✓		
g	Maintain personal hygiene and professional appearance.	1	1	2	✓	✓	✓
h	Identify and address conflict of interest.	2	0	0	✓	✓	
i	Employ critical thinking.	3	0	2	✓	✓	✓
j	Utilize professional judgement.	3	0	2	✓	✓	✓
k	Practice in a manner that reflects the principles of manual therapy.	3	0	2	✓	✓	✓
l	Practice in a manner that recognizes the broader health care needs of the individual, and the role of massage therapy within the health care system.	2	0	2	✓		

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Practice Competency		Domain & Level			Educational Assessment Environment		
		Cognitive	Psychomotor	Affective	Academic	Simulated	Clinical
m	Recognize the scopes of practice of, and benefits of treatment by, other health care professionals.	2	0	1	✓		
n	Promote awareness of massage therapy as a regulated health profession.	1	0	2	✓		
o	Differentiate between the role of a regulatory body and that of a professional association.	1	0	0	✓		
p	Access and, where relevant, utilize research and professional literature in massage therapy and related disciplines to enhance patient care.	3	0	1	✓		
q	Maintain currency with developments in the profession.	2	0	1	✓		
r	Evaluate strengths and areas for improvement as a therapist.	3	0	2	✓	✓	✓
s	Create comprehensive patient records.	2	0	2	✓	✓	✓
t	Perform basic communication, research and data management functions utilizing a computer.	2	2	0	✓		
u	Employ sustainable business practices.	2	0	2	✓	✓	
v	Perform billing procedures.	1	0	1	✓	✓	
w	Prepare reports for third parties.	3	0	1	✓	✓	
x	Perform first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). (See note 1)	2	2	1			
note 1	<i>First aid and CPR competencies will normally be verified through external certification.</i>						
<b>1.3 Therapeutic Relationship</b>							
a	Display positive regard toward patient.	2	1	2	✓	✓	✓
b	Maintain professional boundaries in relationship with patient.	3	1	2	✓	✓	✓
c	Respect patient's physical privacy.	1	2	2	✓	✓	✓
d	Comply with confidentiality and information privacy requirements.	2	0	2	✓	✓	✓
e	Maintain informed patient consent regarding assessment and treatment.	2	0	2	✓	✓	✓
f	Obtain special consent prior to assessment and treatment of sensitive body areas.	2	0	2	✓	✓	✓
g	Recognize and address the power differential in the patient - therapist relationship.	3	0	2	✓	✓	✓
h	Recognize and address transference and counter-transference.	3	0	2	✓	✓	
i	Employ touch with a therapeutic intent.	2	2	2	✓	✓	✓
j	Advocate with third parties on behalf of patient.	2	1	2	✓		

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## Practice Competencies

Practice Competency		Domain & Level			Educational Assessment Environment		
		Cognitive	Psychomotor	Affective	Academic	Simulated	Clinical
<b>2. Assessment and Treatment Planning</b>							
<b>2.1</b>	<b>Assessment</b>						
a	Obtain comprehensive case history from patient.	3	0	2	✓	✓	✓
b	Integrate findings of other health care practitioners.	3	0	1	✓	✓	
c	Apply to assessment, knowledge of commonly-occurring conditions, as listed in the Appendix.	2	0	1	✓	✓	✓
d	Select and perform assessments incorporating knowledge of patient history, contraindications and precautions.	3	2	1	✓	✓	✓
e	Perform ongoing, purposeful observation.	2	1	2	✓	✓	✓
f	Perform postural assessment.	2	2	0	✓	✓	✓
g	Perform palpatory assessment.	2	2	0	✓	✓	✓
h	Perform gait assessment.	2	2	0	✓	✓	
i	Perform functional assessment.	2	2	0	✓	✓	
j	Perform range of motion assessment.	2	2	0	✓	✓	✓
k	Perform muscle length assessment.	2	2	0	✓	✓	
l	Perform muscle strength assessment.	2	2	0	✓	✓	✓
m	Perform joint play assessment.	2	2	0	✓	✓	✓
n	Perform neurological assessment.	2	2	0	✓	✓	✓
o	Perform vital signs assessment.	2	2	0	✓	✓	✓
p	Perform special tests.	2	2	0	✓	✓	✓
q	Modify assessments based upon assessment findings.	3	2	1	✓	✓	✓
r	Recognize conditions requiring urgent medical attention and advise accordingly.	3	0	1	✓	✓	
s	Recognize conditions requiring non-urgent medical attention and advise accordingly.	3	0	1	✓	✓	
t	Interpret findings and formulate clinical impression / differential diagnosis.	3	0	1	✓	✓	✓
u	Refer patient to other health care professionals when appropriate.	3	0	1	✓		
v	Advise patient of relevant community health care and social service resources.	2	0	1	✓		

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## Practice Competencies

Practice Competency		Domain & Level			Educational Assessment Environment		
		Cognitive	Psychomotor	Affective	Academic	Simulated	Clinical
<b>2.2</b>	<b>Treatment Planning</b>						
a	Incorporate an evidence-based approach in treatment planning.	2	0	1	✓		
b	Select treatment modalities and techniques based upon indications, contraindications, precautions and patient stage of life.	3	0	2	✓	✓	✓
c	Formulate individualized treatment plan based upon assessment findings.	3	0	2	✓	✓	✓
d	Reassess patient, and adapt treatment plan as needed.	3	2	1	✓	✓	✓
<b>2.3</b>	<b>Indications for Adjunctive Therapeutic Modalities</b>						
a	Recognize indications for and benefits of therapeutic ultrasound.	1	0	0	✓		
b	Recognize indications for and benefits of low level (cold) laser treatment.	1	0	0	✓		
c	Recognize indications for and benefits of interferential therapy.	1	0	0	✓		
d	Recognize indications for and benefits of transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS).	1	0	0	✓		
e	Recognize indications for and benefits of cranio-sacral therapy.	1	0	0	✓		
f	Recognize indications for and benefits of visceral manipulation.	1	0	0	✓		
g	Recognize indications for and benefits of strapping and taping.	1	0	0	✓		
h	Recognize indications for and benefits of muscle energy techniques.	1	0	0	✓		
i	Recognize indications for and benefits of positional release.	1	0	0	✓		
j	Recognize indications for and benefits of acupuncture.	1	0	0	✓		
<b>3. Treatment and Patient Self-Care</b>							
<b>3.1</b>	<b>Treatment Principles</b>						
a	Maintain a safe and comfortable treatment environment.	2	1	2	✓	✓	✓
b	Apply universal hygiene and infection control precautions.	2	1	1	✓	✓	✓
c	Utilize patient transfer techniques as relevant.	2	2	0	✓	✓	
d	Assist patient with dressing and undressing as needed.	1	1	0	✓	✓	
e	Apply draping as relevant.	2	2	1	✓	✓	✓
f	Position patient for selected therapeutic techniques.	2	2	0	✓	✓	✓
g	Apply treatment modalities and techniques incorporating knowledge of commonly-occurring conditions, as listed in the Appendix.	3	2	2	✓	✓	✓

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## Practice Competencies

Practice Competency		Domain & Level			Educational Assessment Environment		
		Cognitive	Psychomotor	Affective	Academic	Simulated	Clinical
h	Apply treatment modalities and techniques incorporating knowledge of indications, contraindications, precautions and patient stage of life.	3	2	2	✓	✓	✓
i	Implement treatment incorporating environmental setting, speed, duration, intensity, frequency, tissue characteristics, patient constitution and comfort.	2	2	2	✓	✓	✓
j	Provide treatment within therapist's knowledge and skill level.	2	0	2	✓	✓	✓
k	Monitor and adapt to patient response.	3	3	2	✓	✓	✓
l	Advise and instruct patient on self care.	2	2	2	✓	✓	✓
m	Apply biomechanical and postural skills for therapist self-protection.	2	2	1	✓	✓	✓
<b>3.2 Modalities and Techniques</b>							
<b>3.2.a Massage Skills</b>							
1	Perform effleurage techniques.	2	2	0	✓	✓	✓
2	Perform stroking techniques.	2	2	0	✓	✓	✓
3	Perform petrissage techniques.	2	2	0	✓	✓	✓
4	Perform skin rolling techniques.	2	2	0	✓	✓	✓
5	Perform vibration techniques.	2	2	0	✓	✓	✓
6	Perform percussive techniques.	2	2	0	✓	✓	✓
7	Perform rocking and shaking techniques.	2	2	0	✓	✓	✓
8	Perform friction techniques.	2	2	0	✓	✓	✓
9	Perform muscle stripping techniques.	2	2	0	✓	✓	✓
10	Perform muscle approximation techniques.	2	2	0	✓	✓	✓
11	Perform origin / insertion techniques.	2	2	0	✓	✓	✓
12	Perform Golgi tendon organ techniques.	2	2	0	✓	✓	✓
13	Perform lymphatic drainage techniques.	2	2	0	✓	✓	
14	Direct patient in diaphragmatic breathing.	2	2	0	✓	✓	✓
15	Direct patient in progressive relaxation techniques.	2	2	0	✓	✓	✓

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## Practice Competencies

Practice Competency		Domain & Level			Educational Assessment Environment		
		Cognitive	Psychomotor	Affective	Academic	Simulated	Clinical
<b>3.2.b</b>	<b>Myofascial Techniques</b>						
1	Perform trigger point release techniques.	2	2	0	✓	✓	✓
2	Perform direct strain induction techniques.	2	2	0	✓	✓	✓
3	Perform indirect strain induction techniques.	2	2	0	✓	✓	✓
<b>3.2.c</b>	<b>Therapeutic Exercise</b>						
1	Choose equipment and / or environment for selected therapeutic technique.	2	0	0	✓	✓	
2	Perform contract / relax techniques.	2	2	0	✓	✓	✓
3	Perform contract / relax / contract techniques.	2	2	0	✓	✓	✓
4	Perform agonist contraction techniques.	2	2	0	✓	✓	
5	Perform stretch techniques.	2	2	0	✓	✓	✓
6	Perform active assisted range of motion techniques.	2	2	0	✓	✓	
7	Perform passive range of motion techniques.	2	2	0	✓	✓	✓
8	Direct patient in active range of motion techniques.	2	2	0	✓	✓	✓
9	Perform isometric, isokinetic and isotonic resistance exercise techniques.	2	2	0	✓	✓	✓
10	Direct patient in anaerobic exercise techniques.	2	2	0	✓	✓	
11	Direct patient in aerobic exercise techniques.	2	2	0	✓	✓	
12	Direct patient in balance exercises.	2	2	0	✓	✓	
13	Direct patient in coordination exercises.	2	2	0	✓	✓	
14	Direct patient in functional skill exercises.	2	2	0	✓	✓	
<b>3.2.d</b>	<b>Joint Mobilization</b>						
1	Perform oscillation techniques.	2	2	0	✓	✓	✓
2	Perform sustained glide techniques.	2	2	0	✓	✓	✓
3	Perform distraction techniques.	2	2	0	✓	✓	✓
4	Perform compression techniques.	2	2	0	✓	✓	✓
5	Direct patient in auto-mobilization.	2	2	0	✓	✓	

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Massage Therapy**

**Practice Competencies**

Practice Competency		Domain & Level			Educational Assessment Environment		
		Cognitive	Psychomotor	Affective	Academic	Simulated	Clinical
<b>3.2.e</b>	<b>Thermal Therapy</b>						
1	Perform bath treatments.	2	0	0	✓		
2	Perform affusion treatments.	2	0	0	✓		
3	Perform wash treatments.	2	0	0	✓		
4	Perform steam treatments.	2	0	0	✓		
5	Perform whirlpool treatments.	2	0	0	✓		
6	Perform sauna treatments.	2	0	0	✓		
7	Perform paraffin wax treatments.	2	2	0	✓	✓	
8	Perform heat pack treatments.	2	2	0	✓	✓	✓
9	Perform techniques utilizing therapeutic heating pads.	2	2	0	✓	✓	✓
10	Perform infrared light treatment techniques.	2	0	0	✓		
11	Perform cold pack treatments.	2	2	0	✓	✓	✓
12	Perform treatments utilizing ice towels.	2	2	0	✓	✓	
13	Perform cold / ice immersion treatments.	2	0	0	✓		
14	Perform ice massage treatments.	2	2	0	✓	✓	
15	Perform skin scrub treatments.	2	0	0	✓		
16	Perform poultice treatments.	2	0	0	✓		
17	Perform wrap treatments.	2	0	0	✓		
18	Utilize physical agents and additives.	2	0	0	✓		
19	Perform contrast treatments.	2	2	0	✓	✓	

## Inter-Jurisdictional Competency Profile Massage Therapy

## Appendix - Conditions

*Entry-level Massage Therapists should possess knowledge of the etiology, pathophysiology and clinical manifestations of commonly-occurring conditions, and apply this knowledge in order to safely and effectively assess and treat patients who present with these conditions.*

*Knowledge is required of commonly-occurring conditions that fall within the following areas:*

<b>1. Mental Health Conditions</b>	
a	Addiction
b	Affective disorders
c	Anxiety
d	Depression
e	Post traumatic stress disorder
<b>2. Neurological Conditions</b>	
a	Conditions of the central nervous system
b	Conditions of the peripheral nervous system
c	General neurological conditions
<b>3. Orthopedic Conditions</b>	
a	Conditions of the bone and periosteum
b	Conditions of the muscles and tendons
c	Conditions of the skin and connective tissue
d	Conditions of the synovial joints, cartilage, ligaments and bursa
e	Systemic myofascial and orthopedic conditions
<b>4. Post-Surgical Conditions</b>	
a	Conditions involving amputations
b	Conditions involving artificial joints
c	Conditions involving artificial openings
d	Conditions involving implants
e	Conditions involving organ removal
f	Conditions involving pacemakers
h	Conditions involving prosthetics
j	Conditions involving rods, pins, staples
k	Conditions involving shunts
l	Conditions involving stents
m	Conditions involving transplants

<b>5. Systemic Conditions</b>	
a	Conditions of the cardiovascular system
b	Conditions of the digestive system
c	Conditions of the endocrine system
d	Conditions of the gastrointestinal system
e	Conditions of the immune system
f	Conditions of the integumentary system
g	Conditions of the lymphatic system
h	Conditions of the reproductive system
i	Conditions of the respiratory system
j	Conditions of the urinary system