

**Making Sense of Research: A Guide to Research Literacy for Complimentary Practitioners.**  
By Martha Brown Menard

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Reviewed by Isobel McDonald, RMT, BScN, BA

In the course of reviewing *Making Sense of Research*, I've gathered the impressions of at least two, maybe three, dozen RMTs and students at various workshops, AGMs, presentations, parties and so forth. The uniform response has been "Where can I get this book?" and/or "Why didn't we have a book like this when we were in school?"

To get a more objective response, I gave the book to a social sciences professor at SFU who teaches courses in undergraduate and graduate research methodology. Within a few moments of intense focus and rapidly flipping pages she responded: "This is excellent! Where can I get this book?"

*Making Sense of Research* by Martha Menard Brown is the latest product from Canada's own Curties-Overzet, the only publishing company created to exclusively produce cutting edge massage therapy education materials.

This brilliant little gem of a book (only 159 pages, including an index and glossary) has strong relevance to massage therapy because Menard has been a practising massage therapist since 1982. Uniquely, she also has a PhD in the theory and practice of how to design and conduct research. Plus, she has taught workshops on research literacy for years and, as well read RMTs will know, she contributes regularly on research literacy to various massage journals. So much knowledge distilled into such a slim book is the work of a tried and true expert.

As is the case with many of the world's



best books, she wrote the book she wanted to read but couldn't find. Menard's overall message is that in order to hold our own in the professional health care community, we need to be able to keep up with scientific advances and offer our patients best practices based on evidence. This requires research literacy.

With not a wasted word, Menard takes the reader step by step through a brief overview of the scientific method, how to locate and identify types of study designs in journal articles and how to read and critically evaluate both qualitative and quantitative articles. The chapter titled 'The Anatomy of a Journal Article' is worth the price of the book alone. This is the chapter the professor from SFU would like to photocopy for her courses (through Cancopy\*, of course).

Although not presented as such, this book is also the most accessible 'how to' manual for doing research an RMT could hope to find. The skills required to critically analyze research are largely the same ones needed to design a study that will be valid and relevant.

The book has a local angle too. Allan Best, PhD, clinical professor in Health Care

# Books

and Epidemiology at UBC, wrote the introduction. Best acknowledges that RMTs wanting to stay current can quickly feel defeated by the ever-expanding swamp of new research being published. He says, "You'll need to sharpen your research literacy so you can discern what to trust and what to question. You'll need to develop strategies for using your scarce time and energy in a personal plan for continuous learning about evidence based care... this book provides a doorway through which to begin." Those with intermediate and advanced research literacy will still want to go through this door to witness and learn from Menard's ability to synthesize complex intellectual frameworks into simple, accessible ideas.

This very good book deserves to be a very big success, in fact, it deserves to be a cross-over hit. RMTs aren't the only ones who need research literacy, but we are the ones who are lucky enough to have this book, written for us by one of us. I wish all other health professionals and social scientists the good fortune of discovering this book.

ISOBEL MCDONALD works in Vancouver. She will be presenting her own research at the 2nd International Symposium on the Science of Touch in Montreal, May 15, 2004. Rumour has it that Martha Brown Menard will present a research literacy workshop at the Symposium.

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