

Hand Therapy Certification Commission 2008 Study Group Survey



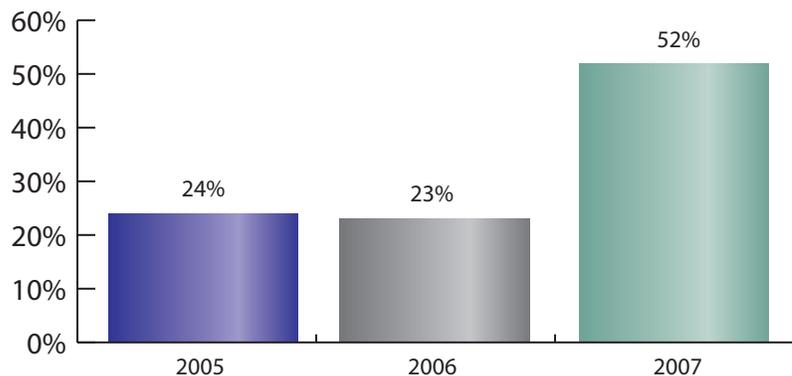
Overview

In 2008, HTCC conducted a survey of therapists who passed the Hand Therapy Certification Examination in 2005, 2006 and 2007 to gather information about how study groups were utilized by candidates who participated in them while preparing for the examination. HTCC is providing the results of that survey so that future candidates might benefit from their experiences.

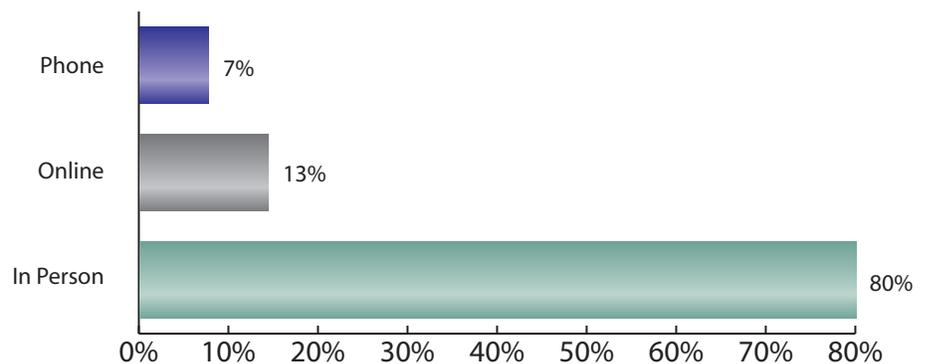
Disclaimer: HTCC is providing aggregated survey data to be used only for informational purposes. HTCC does not endorse, promote, review, or warrant the accuracy of any information provided, nor by providing this information does HTCC suggest, directly or indirectly, what study methods should be used, nor does HTCC imply that following the suggested methods will result in successful passage of the CHT examination.

The Survey Questions & Answers

1. In what year did you pass the examination?



2. How did your group meet?



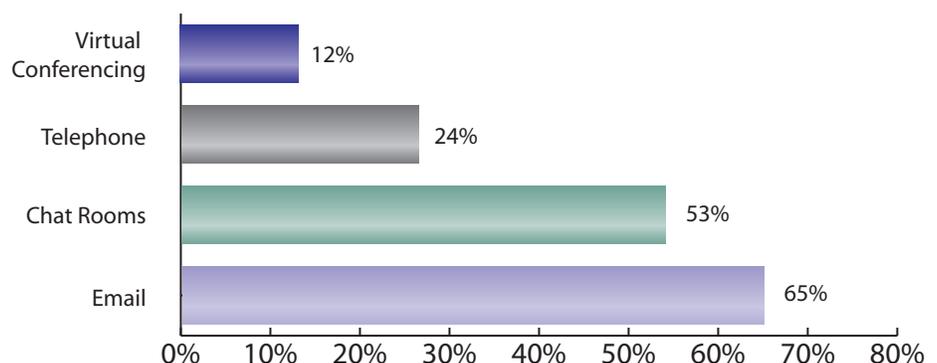
3. What was the overall structure of your study group?

Study groups were organized in a wide variety of ways, from very formal and structured, to informal and unstructured. Meetings were held in medical facilities, homes, chat rooms, and coffee houses. One common thread was breaking down the material to be studied into topic areas. Eighty-four percent of the groups assigned topics to members.

Other comments included:

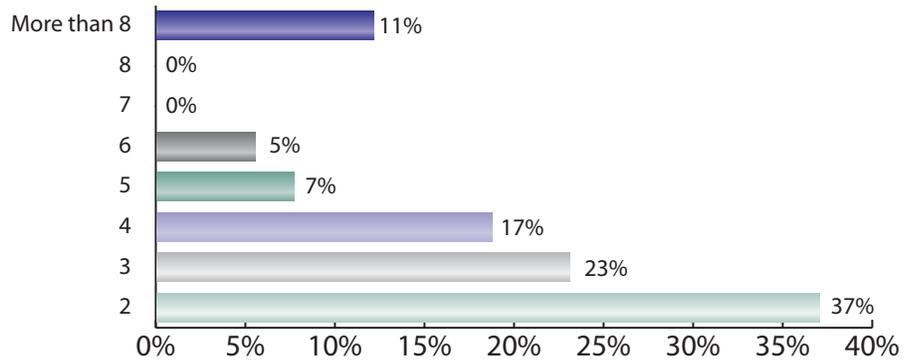
- ▶ We all chose different topics and researched them and provided information in a written format to the group. This study group wasn't specifically for the CHT exam, it was to become a more effective therapist, but it was very helpful in passing the exam 4 years later.
- ▶ I started by compiling a calendar of dates and times we would meet in the chat room. Each date was given a specific topic and each member would study that topic for the week and prepare 3 questions for the group. We took turns asking a question to the group, waited 30-45 seconds for everyone to give an answer, and then the question giver gave the correct answer and an explanation, if needed.
- ▶ I met with one other person who I met from the HTCC website. We met weekly and discussed/quizzed each other over the material that we had delineated for that week. We divided the material based on the chapters in the "Purple Book" and read the corresponding "Rehab of the Hand" chapters. Two months prior to the exam we took practice exams and restudied the needed materials. We participated in three conference calls a week for the last six weeks and met a few whole days on Saturdays to study and quiz each other.
- ▶ I discussed various subjects by phone with therapists who were living in different states.
- ▶ Studied with one other candidate weekly and I organized CHTs and doctors to present topics for the two of us monthly.
- ▶ About 5-6 therapists met at a therapy clinic hosted by a CHT with her boss's permission to use the facility after hours. The CHT advised us to purchase books and team up to review the books chapter by chapter. She told us to persist if we did not pass on the first go.
- ▶ The therapists in my department and another hand therapy department in the city would get together at lunch time. Originally we met once every two weeks, closer to November we met every week. Each one of us would take turns presenting a chapter from the *Hand Therapy Certification Study Module* and other research on that topic.
- ▶ Our study group consisted of 3-4 people and was organized by the owner of my company, who is a CHT. Two of the group members took the exam that year and passed, one the following year and passed.

4. If your study group was online, how did you communicate with your group?

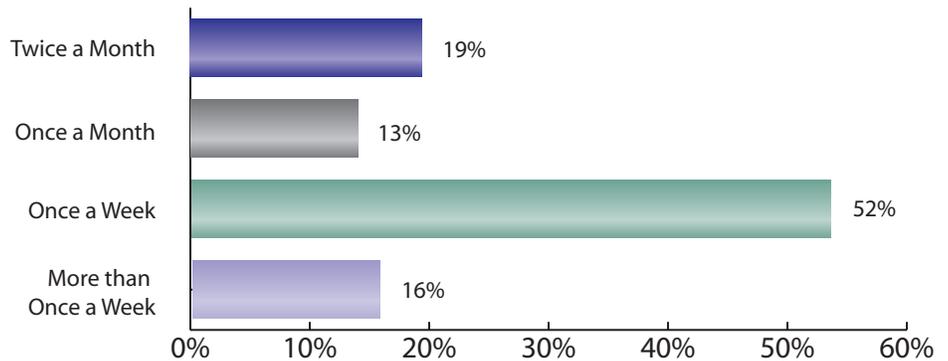


5. How many members were in your study group?

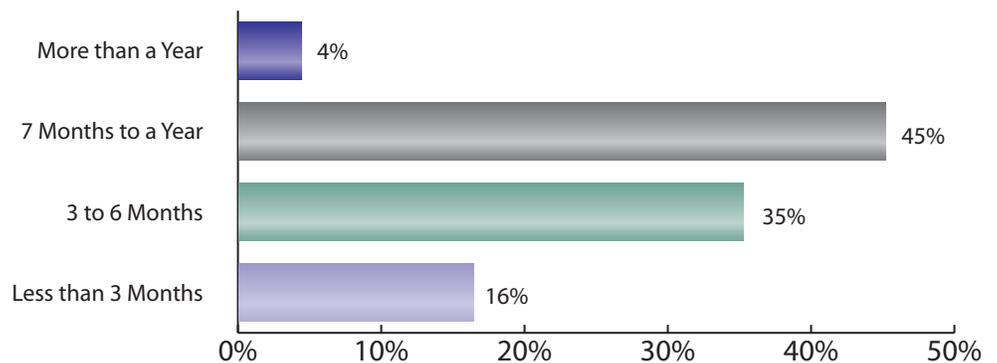
Sixty percent of the respondents stated that they had between 2-3 members in their study groups. In general, online study groups were larger than the in person study groups; two-thirds of the groups with more than eight members met online.



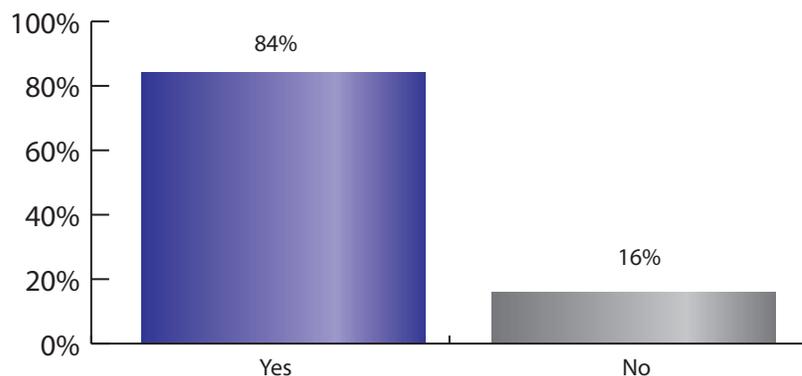
6. How often did you meet?



7. How long did your group meet?



8. Did you assign topics?



The majority of study groups assigned topics according to a reference such as Mackin, Callahan, Skirven, Schneider and Osterman's *Rehabilitation of the Hand and Upper Extremity*, 5th Edition, the *Test Prep Book* from the American Society of Hand Therapists (ASHT) or *Hand Rehabilitation: A Quick Reference Guide* (also sometimes referred to as "The Purple Book") from Exploring Hand Therapy. Chapters in these reference books were divided amongst the group members and presented during the study group time. In some instances sample test questions were generated based upon assigned topics.

Other methods to assign topics included:

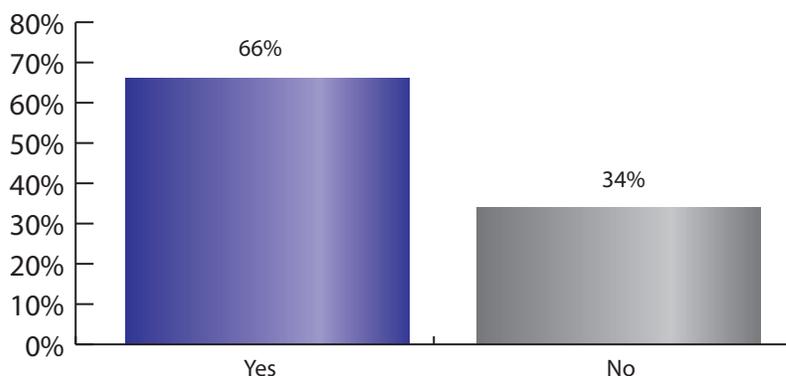
- ▶ Each group member picked a topic, did all the research, prepared all the materials, presented it to the group and gave everyone the material for later studying.
- ▶ Each therapist was assigned 3 topics. Topics were pre-recorded onto "webex" an online web conferencing site. Each member went on-line to view the webex material and we discussed them during our monthly meeting.
- ▶ I compiled a list of topics and everyone prepared 3 questions to share with the group for a weekly question and answer session.
- ▶ The overall format was set up according to one of the hand therapy study guides. Each group participant volunteered to thoroughly investigate a topic and provide the information, which included visual aids, handouts, etc.
- ▶ We were each assigned a chapter to present to the group but we were all responsible for reviewing all of the chapters for that particular session.
- ▶ People who felt weak on a topic chose to pick that topic to present to the group.
- ▶ Those people that were familiar with the specific topic would present that topic; otherwise, we would discuss each topic and find out what everyone knew/read about it.
- ▶ We followed the blueprint provided by HTCC.
- ▶ We mapped out a schedule in early October and read the same material. We tended to recall different aspects of the material and explained it to each other and helped each other with recall strategies.
- ▶ We met at first to break down the anatomy by body part and further categories of pathologies, treatment and anatomy.
- ▶ We organized the material by weeks, so each week we split up certain subtopics relating to a larger topic and each summarized the info for the others in the group. We often gave each other typed summaries for reference.
- ▶ We would choose a topic, all would read about it and summarize and discuss it at our weekly group meeting.

9. What books or journals did you use?

Top rated primary references included the 5th edition of *Rehabilitation of the Hand*, *Hand Rehabilitation: A Quick Reference Guide and Review*, the *ASHT Test Prep Book*, the *Journal of Hand Therapy*, and *Green's Operative Hand Surgery*.

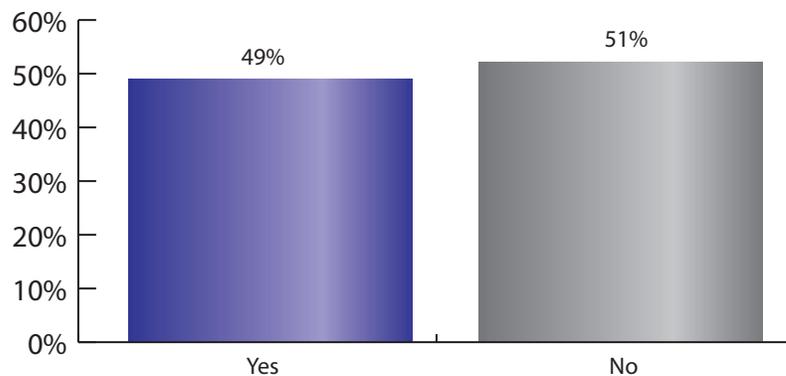
Secondary references included: various anatomy books, *Hand Secrets*, manual muscle testing books, *Trumble's Principles of Hand Surgery and Therapy*, and *Hand Pearls*. Links to these publications can be found at www.htcc.org in the HTCC bookstore.

10. Did you generate practice test questions?



Many of the study group participants generated their own practice test questions while others purchased study guides containing practice test questions through ASHT or *Exploring Hand Therapy*. Other participants stated that they placed practice questions on flashcards and reviewed them frequently. In general, online study groups generated practice test questions more frequently than the in person study groups.

11. Did a CHT, surgeon or other experienced therapist serve as a mentor or consultant to your group?



CHT's were more likely to be mentors to study groups than hand surgeons.

11. Did a CHT, surgeon or other experienced therapist serve as a mentor or consultant to your group? (Continued)

Roles that the mentors played included:

- ▶ A CHT met with us one day to go over her areas of expertise.
- ▶ A CHT would ask me questions and quiz me on special tests, diagnoses, treatments, etc. I also worked with a hand surgeon who fully explained surgical procedures and rehabilitation plans.
- ▶ A PT, CHT helped us with the shoulder sections and told us how she studied for the exam.
- ▶ All the CHT's in our clinic were mentors to us and helped us with journal articles that were helpful to them and suggested topics which might be helpful to research.
- ▶ Another CHT had given us her study group outline and suggestions on topics to study.
- ▶ I had been working under 2 CHT's for 5 years prior to the exam, with the ability to ask questions and treat challenging patients daily.
- ▶ If there were questions that we couldn't get answered within our group we would bring them to our CHTs at our facility for help.
- ▶ My hand surgeon helped me a lot, and I discussed topics with him on a monthly basis.
- ▶ A CHT would quiz us with difficult questions, and we would have to look up the answers we didn't know.
- ▶ A CHT ran the group and directed us towards thinking a certain way or looking for certain research, etc.
- ▶ CHTs were not directly consulting our group, but we each had CHTs at our respective employments, who we would bounce questions and ideas off of, based on what we had covered during the week.
- ▶ There were a couple of CHT's we consulted with throughout the process on a regular basis to clarify questions and help us better understand some topics. One of the members had direct access to a surgeon who we also consulted occasionally.
- ▶ Two CHT's mentored us, mostly to check on the topics we were studying and occasionally to let us know if we were getting too "in depth" with our questions/studying.
- ▶ We had dinner with a local hand surgeon the week prior to the test to discuss questions.

12. What did you find most effective about your study group?

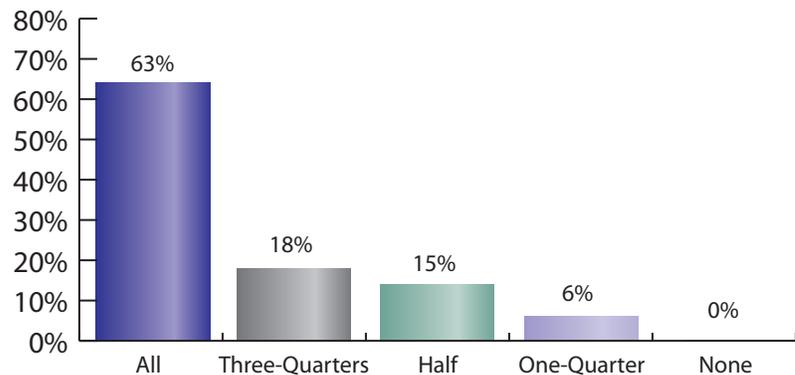
Many respondents to the survey stated that the study groups kept them accountable and on schedule with their studying. Others expressed the value of hearing other people's perspective regarding topics and study techniques. Some stated that the study group became a support group and motivation for those studying for the exam and that the study group was a "comfort zone" to ask questions and receive explanations by peers. Still others expressed the value of teaching what they had researched and learned to other group members. Other comments included:

- ▶ Ability to see how others worded questions and processed information. It was great to hear others explain things and give their tips on how they remember different things.
- ▶ Everyone brought something different to the table. What one did not know, one of the others did.
- ▶ It was necessary to problem solve through each subject/topic individually, so when we met to discuss it, the material was reinforced. We also would periodically review previous subject matter with quiz questions.
- ▶ The chance to hear what others found to be useful information that I may have overlooked or did not understand when I read it.
- ▶ They pushed me to learn. I would meet with them and feel like I didn't learn enough over the past week listening to them review what they learned...we pushed each other. The review was great! Three years later and I still could use a study group.

13. What would you have changed about your study group?

Suggested study group changes included having more structure to the group, having a CHT mentor be part of the group, changing the frequency of the group to meet more often, starting earlier and having guest speakers. The majority of the survey respondents stated that they would not have made any changes to their study groups and thought that they were very effective.

14. How many members of your study group passed the CHT examination?



15. General comments about study groups

Some general comments about study groups included:

- ▶ Finding one or two people with the same interest level is imperative for a study group and having mentoring from co-workers and MDs is huge.
- ▶ Highly recommend all therapists testing for the CHT examination actively participate in a study group.
- ▶ I believe I would have found it difficult to pass the exam without the study group. The requirements of our group pushed us to new levels. We studied, but also provided each other with new treatment techniques, splinting techniques, discussed unfamiliar diagnoses. It became more than a study group for the test.
- ▶ I found HTCC's handout on exam preparation prior to my study very useful in devising how to plan my study – initially on my own with flash cards on anatomy etc.; splitting topics into certain weeks; and then with a study group in the final 2-3 months meeting weekly.
- ▶ I have always encouraged anyone preparing for the exam to rely on at least 3-4 resources. I read and took notes on *Rehab of the Hand* and then studied my notes. I know several people who relied completely on "The Purple Book" and they failed.
- ▶ I think the key to passing was starting to study early; we started the March before the November exam. We had enough time to go through all the material and not cram.
- ▶ I would recommend a study group to anyone taking the CHT exam. One of my colleagues took it in 2007 and did not use a study group and she did not pass.
- ▶ Personally, equal parts study group and independent study helped me prepare for the exam.
- ▶ We used the HTCC website to find group members. Thanks!
- ▶ It was a lot of work—but it was worth it!!!

Online Resources

The following online resources were identified by survey participants as being helpful in organizing and setting up their study groups.

HTCC website (www.htcc.org)

- ▶ **Study Groups:** find or post a study group online or by location
- ▶ **2007 Exam Preparation Report:** summarizes the results of a survey of therapists who have recently passed the Hand Therapy Certification Examination.
- ▶ **Examination Blueprint:** a document that has been derived from surveying hand therapists about the nature of their practice and determines the percentage of content included on the test.
- ▶ **Preparation Materials:** a list of recommended reading for candidates preparing for the Hand Therapy Certification Examination
- ▶ **Continuing Education Calendar:** lists courses posted to the HTCC website by location or online.

Communication Resources

- ▶ **Chatzy:** a free private online chat site: www.chatzy.com
- ▶ **Google:** www.google.com featuring:
 - **Email:** free mail account with gmail
 - **Google Groups:** create mailing lists and discussion groups online
 - **Google Calendar:** organize your schedule and share events with group members
 - **Google Documents:** create and share documents online
- ▶ **Skype:** Make free voice or video calls from your computer or chat to other people who also are on Skype. Free download at www.skype.com
- ▶ **Webex:** an online web conferencing site: www.webex.com

Educational Resources

- ▶ **Journal of Hand Therapy:** offers free online searches of past JHT articles to subscribers: <http://journals.elsevierhealth.com/periodicals/hanthe>
- ▶ **Duke Orthopedics:** *Wheeless Book of Orthopedics:* www.wheelessonline.com
- ▶ **Eaton Hand:** an electronic textbook of hand surgery, anatomy and therapy: www.eatonhand.com
- ▶ **Emedicine from WebMD:** an online open access comprehensive medical textbook for orthopedic surgery <http://www.emedicine.com/orthoped/index.shtml>
- ▶ **Get Body Smart:** an online interactive functional anatomy website: <http://www.getbodysmart.com/ap/muscularsystem/menu/menu.html>
- ▶ **Learn and draw the Brachial Plexus in 5 minutes:** http://www.ama-assn.org/ama1/pub/upload/mm/15/brachial_plex_how_to.pdf
- ▶ **Loyola University Master Muscle List:** a quick and easy reference for accessing information on the origin, insertion, nerve supply and action of muscles: <http://www.meddean.luc.edu/lumen/MedEd/GrossAnatomy/dissector/mml>
- ▶ **Northwest University Hand Page:** Department of Surgery's website containing links to journal articles regarding a wide variety of hand and upper extremity conditions: www.surgery.northwestern.edu/plasticreading/sites/Hand.html
- ▶ **Orthopedics Hyperguide:** an online educational program, designed for health care professionals. It features tutorials, online lectures and test questions in the areas of adult, foot ankle and hand orthopedics, basic science, pediatric orthopedics, sports medicine and trauma: www.ortho.hyperguides.com
- ▶ **PubMed:** a service of the U.S. National Library of Medicine (www.nlm.nih.gov) that includes over 18 million citations from MEDLINE and other life science journals for biomedical articles back to the 1950s. PubMed includes links to full text articles and other related resources. www.pubmed.gov