

Transdisciplinary research may valuably help broaden comprehension of fascia

Sue Adstrum, MSc, Integrative anatomist. PhD Candidate, Department of Anatomy, University of Otago, 270 Great King Street, New Zealand. Email: sueadstrum@xtra.co.nz

BACKGROUND Research is constrained by its theoretical perspective, methodological approach, and research methods. Quantitative research is invaluable when formulating a technical understanding of fascia in rigorously controlled settings, yet it fails to explain how fascia is known in society, where it is subject to more varied contextualizing influences. Recent changes in fascia's literary portrayal raise questions about how fascia is currently comprehended in the world at large. Might there be some, possibly noteworthy, differences in how fascia is understood in different community settings? If so, what are they? What might have caused them? And why might this matter?

APPROACH This transdisciplinary study drew on Heidegger's (1977) assertion that scholars must persist in discovering new ways of investigating things in order to expand humanity's understanding of them. Historiographic and ethnographic research methods were used to respectively (a) explore the historical development of fascia's English-language literary description, and, (b) investigate how fascia is currently depicted during the education of nine distinct groups of New Zealand (NZ) clinical health practitioners. The data were thematically examined in order to discover how 15 study participants (educators) describe fascia to their grouped students, and why they might explain fascia in that particular way.

RESULTS Anatomic meaning of 'fascia' has evolved during the 400 years this term has been used in English language medical writing. Fasciae have traditionally been explained as a range of dissectible membranous structures. During the past two decades fascia has been additionally depicted as a pervasive connective tissue system. A similar dichotomy in meaning is evident in fascia's portrayal to nine groups of health care professionals-in-training, and appears to be primarily related to changes in the fabric of NZ society rather than the regular progression of scholarly knowledge.

CONCLUSION Transdisciplinary research enabled the exposure of a likely contemporary discontinuity in the interpreted meaning of fascia that can reasonably be expected to be far-reaching in effect. Development of new and creative approaches to fascia research ought to be encouraged.

REFERENCE Heidegger M. The question concerning technology and other essays. New York: Harper & Row, 1977.

The research was conducted with the approval of the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee

