

## **Fascia is varyingly depicted to different groups of health care practitioners-in-training**

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**PURPOSE** Anatomic meaning of 'fascia' has evolved during the past 400 years. 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. This study aimed to discover whether there might be a similar change in the way fascia is construed by New Zealand (NZ) health care professionals, as it could, should it exist, affect cross-disciplinary and broader community discussion about the structure, function, remedial treatment, and seeming importance of the body's soft connective tissue system.

**METHODS** This study used ethnographic fieldwork methods (semistructured interviews and participant observation) to investigate how fascia is anatomically described by 15 study participants (educators) during their respective instruction of student dentists, doctors, massage therapists, osteopaths, and physiotherapists; and Anatomy Trains, CranioSacral Therapy, Fascial Kinetics, and Kinesio Taping practitioners-in-training. The data (pooled fieldnotes and interview transcripts) were thematically examined in order to discover how the study participants (educators) describe fascia to their students.

**RESULTS** Fascia is generally portrayed in either of two ways to these groups of students: (1) a range of inert membranous structures, or (2) a dynamic pervasive soft connective tissue system that manifests in a variety of interconnected forms. These explanations correspond to fascia's traditional (anatomical) and emergent (interdisciplinary) literary depiction, respectively.

**CONCLUSIONS** Fascia is varyingly interpreted in different NZ health practitioner educative settings, and possibly also across a range of health care professions. Care needs to be taken so that local variation in the meaning of fascia does not confuse communal communication about this subject.

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