

Does Subtle Isometric Contraction Engage the Fascial Tissues And Can Subjects Be Taught This As A Self Care Programme For Chronic Pain? Can we contract our fascia?

Ruth Duncan. Dip Sports Therapy, Myofascial Release Therapist

Myofascial Release UK. 12 Station Rd St, Milngavie, Glasgow, G62 8AB. Scotland. UK
Tel- 0845 602 6274. Email – Ruth@MyofascialRelease.co.uk

BACKGROUND

Slow sustained stretching has been used within movement modalities to promote healthy fascia. However, many chronic pain sufferers cannot tolerate stretching. The human body is a tensegrity structure made of compressible and non-compressible parts. If we can stretch our fascia in one area, we must therefore be compressing it somewhere else. If we can teach subjects to stretch their fascia, we must also be able to teach them how to compress their fascia with gentle isometric contraction.

METHOD

Hip pain was measured on a visual analogue scale for ten subjects (five females and five males). The average scale measured eight out of ten for pain on walking. Each subject was treated with the John F. Barnes approach to myofascial release using focused awareness with a sustained gentle longitudinal leg compression technique into the hip with the subject lying supine on a treatment couch. Subjects were taught how to gently compress their own leg, hip and low back lying on their bed or the floor to initiate similar responses. Subjects performed this approach once per day for one week.

RESULTS

All ten subjects reported greater comfort in their hip and low back on walking. The most significant finding was that all of the subjects reported a greater awareness of the positioning of the foot, knee, hip and back and an enhanced mobility and stability of these joints on general.

CONCLUSIONS

The application of subtle stretch and or compression can be taught to chronic pain subjects as a home care and rehabilitation programme to promote both proprioception and reduction of tissue tension. Focused awareness to perform the gentle sustained isometric contraction enhanced the treatment outcomes allowing the subjects to cultivate greater interoception.

Further clinical trials and research is required to establish if fascial tissues can be contracted with sustained isometric contraction and if this approach can enhance the treatment of chronic pain subjects.