# Parallels in the Clinical Research Process between Spinal Manipulation/Mobilization and Fascia Modulation.

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## PURPOSE

Fascial modulation/manipulation as a developing treatment modality is a growing science. By now the scientific base explaining the concept and rationale for treatment is very well established. However, the clinical application has very little research to support its usefulness and application. The challenge ahead is to coordinate the research process in such a way to provide clinicians practicing in this field with sufficient evidence so that they can enhance evidence based practice. Thirty to forty years ago the concept of spinal manipulation/mobilization faced very similar challenges. The purpose of this study is to identify when clinical research started in the spinal manipulation/mobilization arena and draw some parallels in the research process with a view to expedite the clinical research process.

## APPROACH

Literature review was performed through Pubmed and Ovid.

## RESULTS

A new breed of researchers viz. Flynn, Fritz, Koppenhaver, Childs and others, brought a fresh look at clinical research only after the turn of the century. They brought us the first clinical prediction rules. Probably the biggest contribution from these clinical researchers came in the classification systems they developed for cervical and lumbar dysfunction. These classification systems define most beneficial treatment approaches for particular sets of criteria. Clinical researchers established that manipulation is more effective than mobilization. They also demonstrated that, under particular conditions, the effectiveness of spinal manipulation does not depend on the technique or approach used and that thoracic manipulation improves neck pain when performed in conjunction with cervical manipulation. None of these have been established for the multiple approaches in fascia modulation.

## CONCLUSIONS

The scope of the fascia modulation approaches is very wide, ranging from very strong physical techniques such as digging elbows and stones into tissue causing bruising, to very gentle stroking focusing on neurophysiological principles. Every approach has their glory stories as well as their failures. Establishing parameters for when any particular approach would be more effective than another is called for. It took the manipulation world 30 years to reach these conclusions. By coordinating and guiding the research process we should be able to produce relevant clinical research in a much shorter time. In order to formulate the appropriate research questions we are in dire need of multiple case studies. Case studies give definition. They describe the techniques we use. Case studies also help defining the appropriate research questions. Every detail of a case study has the potential to become a variable for future research. Without this initial step in the peer-reviewed arena we will spend many unnecessary years trying to validate our effectiveness and usefulness as an evidence based treatment modality.