

Just a Load of Balls?

By Matt Wallden

for the Osteopathic Sports Care Society, September 2002

- Have you ever wondered if you've become a little set in your ways?
- Have you ever experienced a desire for new, applied knowledge?
- Have you found yourself relying too much on educated "guess-work", and feeling uncomfortable with the lack of objectivity in your assessment?
- Perhaps you may even have felt let down, that despite your training, you are unable to decipher the complexities of some patient's conditions...

Fundamentals

Of course, if doubts ever creep into your "holistic osteopathic practice" it is the strength of the fundamental principles underpinning our profession which reassure our concerns or discomfort.

In osteopathy:

"The whole is greater than the sum of the parts"

"Structure and function are inter-dependent"

"Restriction in one part of the biomechanical chain results in strain of another part"

In naturopathy:

"Only nature heals"

"The seed is nothing, the terrain is everything"

"The body is a self-regulating, self-maintaining mechanism"

But when you limit the power of these undeniable truths, by allowing yourself access to much less than half the "therapeutic tool kit", no wonder you have the odd day where no-one seems to be getting better, or you have to refer someone for surgery because your osteopathy couldn't "magic" them better.

Had you ever noticed that we can only loosen tight, restricted areas with our hands, but to tighten loose, unstable areas (with more than just a bit of educated guess-work) seems to fall well outside our usual remit? Furthermore, you may have noted that "biomechanics" is considered by most medical models as only one third of the *triad of health*. Therefore assuming that in any large population there's an even distribution of aetiology across this "triad", you're likely to be able to help at best only 1/6 of all patients with your standard osteopathic armamentarium.

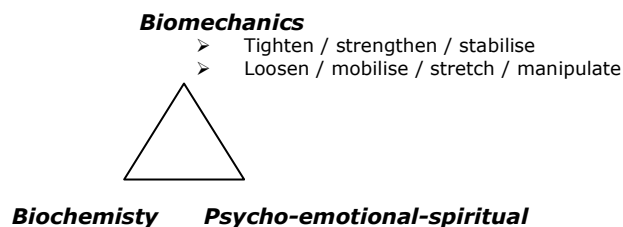


Figure1: The Triad of Health

Aims

What is your main objective of working in manual therapy? Is it to be able to perform that L5-S1 HVLA on every person who walks through your door, no

matter what their size or state of spasm? Is it to provide some relief from pain to each and every one of your patients? Or is it to locate the causes of your patients' dysfunction using the most holistic system of assessment and correction you are able to conceive?

If you are more interested in that last sentence than the others, I should introduce you to a man whose reputation often precedes him:

Paul Chek

Paul Chek is a name that some of you will be familiar with. For those that have heard of him, a common remark is, "Oh yeah, he's the guy who does a lot of Swiss ball / core stability stuff".

Well for those who attended his 2-day *Scientific Back Training* seminar in Brighton last September, the full extent and breadth of Mr Chek's knowledge became all too apparent. Paul's understanding of the interrelationship of different systems of the human body, his ability to apply knowledge and concepts, coupled with his undeterred perseverance to be recognised as one of the world's great therapists and educators, has resulted in a program of unrivalled depth. (It should be noted that this is just one of a series of courses developed and taught by the Chek Institute.)

Paul is a man of systems. Systems for assessing, systems for accumulating knowledge, systems for applying knowledge, systems for correcting dysfunction, systems for teaching and many other systems of systems - technically he's a "cybernetic educator". He has models, hierarchies, plans, he prioritises, and as a result is one of the most successful and sought after therapists in the world.

Philosophy

It is my personal belief that as human beings we all look for something to believe in. Religion has traditionally filled that role, but now more often it's a football team, or perhaps more pertinent to us as manual therapists, we tend to "believe in our profession". This may help to explain Still's and Sutherland's iconic status to many in our profession. And may help us to understand why would we all seem to believe that osteopathy can effectively treat virtually any illness? Undoubtedly osteopathy can benefit virtually any illness, and we surely do all perform a useful professional function along with all other accepted complementary therapists and we all boast many success stories to boost our *raison d'être*. But when you bear in mind that the **average** musculoskeletal complaint takes 8 weeks to heal completely, if you are not getting your patients better in significantly less time than this, are you actually aiding or inhibiting their recovery? Also, when considering this last statement, we should bare in mind that the average person consulting an osteopath is a motivated individual, by virtue of the fact they have taken a positive step to get rid of their pain (and usually this occurs 1-3 weeks after the initial onset). Add to that their willingness to pay money to be treated and you have a population who should get better in considerably less than 8 weeks from their first consultation with you!

A small quote that I believe has huge validity in my career as an osteopath is:

*It's uncomfortable to seek the truth, but untruthful to seek comfort.
The trick is to find comfort in pursuit of the truth.*

What is meant by this, in case it's not obvious, is that a huge number of our contemporaries settle into a routine - something with which they are

comfortable- and only rarely do they challenge their own beliefs. They have found their comfort zone and they are staying within it. In some ways this nullifies blame if treatment goes wrong – as it is the system that is at fault rather than the practitioner, or perhaps the person who devised the system, such as Andrew Taylor Still, or William Garner Sutherland. I believe strongly that those people who stay within their comfort zones are not being truthful to themselves nor to their patients, but it is too uncomfortable for them to step outside. To find a truly holistic approach (the truth) is impossible – as no human being is capable of being truly holistic. And yet we, and others, take some pride in using what is becoming an increasingly bastardised and arguably inappropriate word to describe our expertise.

Challenge

So if you'd like to challenge yourself, to broaden your horizons, to think outside the box, and to question what you've been doing in your clinic, I would suggest that an excellent place to start is www.chekinstitute.com.

If you're familiar with lifting concepts such as

- the hoop tension created by the inner unit,
- the hydraulic amplifier mechanism of the fascial envelopes around the erector spinae,
- the extension moment resulting from a functional transversus abdominis acting on the specific fibre direction in the deep layer of the thoraco-lumbar fascia,
- why 20 degrees of knee flexion is critical for effective action of the hip extensor mechanism...

... then maybe you don't need to listen to Paul Chek.

How about the interaction of upper-cross syndrome with L5-S1 disc herniation? Or effective force coupling of the spino-scapular and scapulo-humeral muscles? Perhaps you'd like to know more about the hierarchy of survival reflexes; a model which suggest that you shouldn't even consider correcting a lumbar spine until you have assessed the function of the TMJ and the upper complex? How about viscerosomatic reflexes inhibiting key muscles of stabilisation? If you fail to address visceral dysfunction in these patients you are only encouraging them to go to see your competition. And who knows? Your competition might have attended Paul's *Scientific Back Training* and be making you look... less than competent.

Background

So what's this guy's background? Where was he trained? Well, Paul was a farm boy - they often are, aren't they? Something to do with the need to find hands-on practical solutions to often complex problems? He grew up in Canada and having left school early, joined the US army, won a hat-full of medals for boxing at an elite level amongst other things, and then through his personal success, became trainer to the US army boxing team, at which time he worked closely with the medical director of the team who was... an osteopath.

Paul's interest in training and in keeping a team of physically and emotionally stressed bodies in tip-top condition meant that he would go on to train as a Neuro-Muscular Therapist. But this is where the story of Paul's formal education ends. With his dogged determination and his ability to apply knowledge to the clinical and training environments, (plus a large measure of circadian stress!), Paul soon started to be regarded by the local physical therapists as something of an embarrassment; in that he kept fixing the cases they couldn't. Increasingly, Paul was asked to run workshops and seminars which across a relatively short

period of time turned into writing articles and books and also producing extensive home-study video programs on his techniques and concepts.

Super-charged CPD

At this point I have to say, that although I'm one of the younger members of our profession, my CPD record can compete with the best of them, so I have confidence in saying that the lectures that Paul delivers are exceptional. If I compare him to any of the doctors or professors I have seen lecture, I have to say that he certainly compares favourably; from many points of view: He references almost every sentence he utters, his knowledge is both specialised and extremely broad, the knowledge he shares is immediately applicable to the clinical environment – not just academia, and his presentation skills rapture audiences and keep them thoroughly entertained.

I should point out that I've had a couple of colleagues that haven't liked his style... he's an American, he has a business to run, and he has great applied information to sell (in the form of additional seminars and video correspondence courses) to the willing student. If, as a member of the audience you are able to get over these facts, it's almost impossible not to be impressed with the integration of knowledge from such credible researchers as Irvin Korr, Frank Willard, Gwendolen Jull, Vladimir Janda, Karel Lewit, Caroline Richardson, Nikolai Bogduk, Serge Gracovetsky, Dianne Lee, Florence Kendall, Jeffrey Bland, Bill Walcott, Andry Vleeming, Richard Don Tigny, Shirley Sarrhman, Caroline Myss, Neale Donald-Walsch, Charles Poliquin, Richard Butler, Paul Hodges, Jean-Pierre Barral... and many, many more besides.

Now assuming you know all the names in the list above, you can't fail to realise that Paul Chek is at the very top of his profession – consistently referencing people at the very top of their professions. However, if there is even one person on that list who you don't recognise, or haven't read, and you have even *once* claimed that you are an "holistic practitioner"... maybe you should consider broadening your horizons and start to make good on your claims. Learning from someone who has painstakingly analysed and consolidated information from the leading lights in osteopathy, Feldenkrais, yoga, martial arts, chiropractic, nutrition, spirituality, kinesiology, biomechanics, exercise physiology, anthropology, athletic training, motor learning, exercise rehabilitation, and the list goes on... is an experience that anyone with an interest in helping people can only find rewarding.

Just a load of balls?

So when Paul is back in the country this May, presenting his next series of seminars, will it be *just a load of balls*? I'll leave you to decide.

By Matt Wallden

Matt Wallden has been a member of OSCA since its inception. Since graduating he has lectured at the BCOM (BCNO) completed an MSc in Osteopathic Medicine and has taken 2 levels of Paul Chek's 4 year certification program and has completed the C.H.E.K. Golf Biomechanic™ certification and the C.H.E.K. Nutrition & Lifestyle Coaching certification courses. Matthew's research into Hamstring Strain in Professional Footballers has been presented at national and international events and is currently being written up for publication in the Journal of Bodywork and Movement Therapy.

If you would like to find out more about the correspondence courses, products or seminars run by Paul Chek, please contact his UK distributor. Please note that Paul Chek Seminars UK have agreed to a special rate for OSCA members exclusively for this May-time lecture series. Please contact:

Alex McKenzie

0845 6014279

alex@paulchekseminars.com

Or the CHEK Institute in San Diego directly:

ginfo@chekinstitute.com

www.chekinstitute.com



CHEKclinic.com