



EDITORIAL

Thoughts on the Amsterdam Fascia Congress: October 2009

In this and subsequent issues of JBMT during 2010, papers will be published that have emerged from the 2nd Congress of Fascia Research, held at the Free University, Amsterdam, during the last week of October 2009. For those wishing to share in the rich experience, a comprehensive immersion is possible through several invaluable resources, in the form of *Proceedings* books, as well as *DVDs*, from the 2007 and the 2009 Congresses. These are available from: <http://www.fasciacongress.org/2009/dvd-book-purchase-pub.htm>

One major change from the first Congress, was the inclusion of two 90 minute plenary sessions, in which experts presented briefly on an assortment of manual (high velocity manipulation, connective tissue manipulation, neurodynamics, positional release techniques, structural integration, and manually induced oscillation) and tool-assisted modalities (acupuncture, functional fascial taping, Fulford percussion/vibration, Graston technique, dry needling) – with the intention of informing scientists, and other practitioners/therapists, about the methods used, and the theories that underpin them – and most importantly the presumed fascial connections. Three eminent researchers/scientists were invited to comment on both demonstrations/presentations. For the manual therapy session these were Professors Moshe Solomonow, Michael Kuchera and Walter Herzog.

For the Tool-assisted presentation the scientific panel comprised Professors Helene Langevin, Andry Vleeming and Siegfried Mense. The topics and presenters of the manual demonstration session are shown in [Figure 1](#).

Impressions of Fascia 2

Stephanie Prendergast MPT

“This meeting was truly multi-disciplinary, both in the presentations, ranging from basic science through clinical practice, and in the audience. This made interactions on and off stage valuable. I had the opportunity to meet professionals I would not have met otherwise. The

knowledge presented and the off-conference conversations have given me more knowledge regarding my own clinical practice and the use of connective tissue manipulation. My ‘wow’ may be an overall insight into research I naively did not know existed. For starters, I was completely unaware that people even studied fascia on a basic science level. Michael Hicks’ presentation taught me external loading on the fascia acts on fibroblasts – and his lecture discussed the differentiation of myoblasts for repair. I had not thought about the impact of our work on a cellular level – perhaps ever – and as a writer, lecturer, teacher and clinician I should have. Helen Langevin pointed out the difference between ‘areolar connective tissue’ and ‘loose connective tissue’. I also became aware of Rolwing literature... and in general, I am pleased to see fascia and therapies studied at cellular levels to help explain our clinical research findings.”

Zachery Comeaux DO

“I recognized the high calibre of the conference and appreciated knowing what experts were paying attention to, and not paying attention to. I appreciated the interdisciplinary mix of participants both in informal conversation, and during the clinical demonstration. From the content point of view, I was most impressed by Dr. van der Waal’s anatomical presentation including the potential role of the connective tissue matrix, including mechanoreceptor function, in coordination of regional motion. Aside from that I felt that the primary research was still largely directed toward the mechanical properties rather than responsiveness of the connective tissue matrix. The next generation of research, I hope, will be more in tune with clinical practice, by defining hypotheses more along the lines of natural process development, injury and therapeutic intervention with the living system in mind. I was excited and surprised to find a communality of ideas with the work of Luiz Fernando Bertolucci (Muscle Repositioning), in the Saturday workshops. His thoughts were able to



Figure 1 Left to right: Leon Chaitow ND DO, Geoffrey Bove PhD DC, Zachary Comeaux DO, Michel Coppieters PhD PT, Stephanie Prendergast MPT, Robert Schleip PhD.

add both new considerations and new moves in my approach to manipulation.”

Geoff Bove PhD DC

“Overall there seems to be a schism between clinicians and scientists, this is not necessarily what it is typically thought to be. Many clinicians were thinking that scientists were trying to prove or disprove that what they do has an effect, or not. This is far from the truth. In fact what emerged is that scientists are interested in HOW the methods work, since most of them seem to work, at least to some degree. Finding the common denominators will be very helpful. Specifically I was very interested in the concept of using massage methods to ameliorate lymphedema post-mastectomy, and found Willem Fourie’s presentation illuminating.” (See [Figure 2](#)).

JBMT’s editor’s high points

- Probably the most dramatic new information that has emerged from the two Fascia Research congresses,

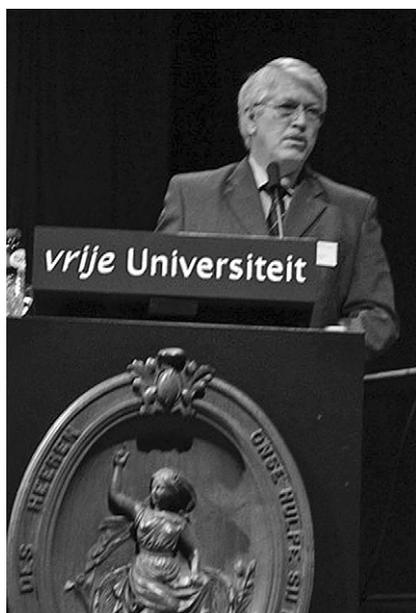


Figure 2 Willie Fourie PT.



Figure 3 Area of ‘densification’ being treated, during Fascial Manipulation® workshop.

relates to the dynamic reconfiguration potential of the collagen network. This virtually instantaneous reconfiguration – occurring within seconds – suggests that the effect of manual therapy can be immediate and significant. “This work is a serious challenge to the classical representation and modelling of biomechanical systems” ([Gracovetsky, in press, Guimberteau, 2007](#)).

- Helene [Langevin \(2009\)](#) provided elegant evidence regarding the speed of change in behaviour of loose (areolar) connective tissue (a matter of seconds – see above) when load is reduced following light static stretching. “Loose connective tissue fibroblasts are dynamically responsive to tissue stretch ex vivo and in vivo.”
- Some of clinical relevance of this new understanding of connective tissue behaviour came from South African physiotherapist, Willie Fourie, who gave an insightful therapist’s view of the management of surgical (mainly post-mastectomy) scar problems... and of the dramatic effect of regularly applied, brief, mild stretching



Figure 4 Julie Ann Day PT and Carla Stecco MD during Fascial Manipulation® workshop.

methods – on Transforming Growth Factor β 1 (TGF- β 1) production and collagen deposition (see [Figure 2](#)).

- Jaap van der Wal offered a terminology lesson – virtually instructing the delegates that “ligaments don’t exist” because they are so enmeshed with connective tissue that the pictures we see in anatomy texts are science fiction. His preferred term, (that may not catch on, I fear, despite his sound argument), is ‘dynamant’, to replace ligament.
- Carla Stecco’s rich presentation offered many insights, including how connective tissue resists traction/elongation, but allows itself to be lifted relatively easily, i.e. to be separated from ‘underlying/parallel structures’.
- A further Stecco illumination related to the ample presence of intra-fascial nerves, oriented perpendicularly, therefore more likely to be stimulated by collagen stretch.
- The Fascial Manipulation[®] workshop (Julie Ann Day and Carla Stecco) was fascinating and instructive. (See [Figures 3 and 4](#)) Space does not allow for a full description – suffice to say that the explanations offered, based on years of dissection and research, at the University of Padua, were impressive.

The clinical implications of the evidence in relation to stretch and compression, as well the previously mentioned revelations regarding fascia’s responsiveness to adaptation demands, as provided by Langevin, Stecco, Schleip, Fourie and others, will require many months of personal processing,

with some clarity possibly emerging in time for the 3rd Fascia Research Congress, which will take place in Vancouver, in 2012. The hosts for the 3rd congress are the Massage Therapists’ Association of British Columbia (MTABC) <http://www.massagetherapy.bc.ca/>.

The theme in 2012 will be the *Practical Application of Research to Practice*.

JBMT will carry advance notice of the event, and will once again be publishing papers from key presenters.

References

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