

GET THE RHYTHM

Oscillatory Movement in Action

By Steven Goldstein

Any method of approach in bodywork optimally should integrate art, science and clinical experience.
Zachary Comeaux

Manual therapy has not utilized oscillation, rhythmic and vibratory applications as effectively as they could. It has long been recognized throughout the bodywork and osteopathic communities as an effective tool to use, but has only been used marginally.

“Rhythmicity has a natural place in those therapeutic disciplines that intend to restore health by restoring natural motion to the body”. (Comeaux 2008).

In this article I will define how vibration has been used in massage therapy and propose that oscillatory approaches has a strong role in applied manual therapy technique.

As a Part of Swedish Massage Tradition

Massage therapy has long included Swedish massage techniques as the basic in massage education. The preliminary exposure to all advance forms of massage and manual therapy application usually began with the instruction of the ‘Big Five’; effleurage, petrissage, friction, tapotement and vibration.

I would like to focus upon the last in the line of instruction. Vibration appears to me to be the poor step-child, that is, students are exposed to the techniques, and asked to apply them for sake of assessment. Because they appear difficult to master, and for that matter, difficult to understand what effect they have in creating soft-tissue change, are often left by the wayside to be discarded as a useful tool in a practitioners ‘arsenal’.

“Vibrations are a group of techniques that consist of rhythmic manipulations of the soft-tissues. The rhythmic manipulation has a unique pattern of oscillation, and this pattern depends upon the type of applied vibration delivered, and has a ‘vibratory signature’.

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signature can be quick, light and rapid, or slow heavy and coarse.” (Stelfox, Casanelia & Goldstein 2010.)

“Oscillation skills link us with vibratory waves that animate the body and all its’ systems.” (Burman & Friedman 2006).

Vibration initiates reverberation, ripple and rebound effects within the body. Tracing and tracking the patterns of these waves is one approach to bringing balance to the body systems.

Vibration manipulation encompasses a collection of strokes that include vibration, rocking, shaking and jostling. Such movements are rhythmic and trembling or oscillating in nature, and may be applied by using the whole hand, the fingertips or even a mechanical device.

All vibratory manipulations commence with some degree of compression. After a desired depth or area is achieved, the hands tremble or oscillate, thus transmitting a ‘vibration’ into the underlying tissue.’ (Stelfox & Casanelia, Foundations of Massage 3rd Ed., 2010 Chp 16 the techniques of Swedish massage p175, Goldstein & Casanelia)

Osteopathy & Oscillation

Two stalwarts in the osteopathic community who have employed differing yet similar forms of oscillatory technique is an American osteopath, Zachary Comeaux, and a renown British osteopath Eyal Lederman. Both have entitled texts that begin with the word Harmonic. Lederman has written *Harmonic Technique* (Churchill-Livingstone, 2000) and Comeaux has penned *Harmonic Healing: a Guide to Facilitated Oscillatory Release and Other Rhythmic Myofascial Techniques*

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Steven demonstrating oscillatory movements in a workshop.

(North Atlantic Books, 2008).

Lederman views how physics is applied when differentiating rhythmic from harmonic technique. Harmonic technique according to Lederman is the recent name given to a group of manual techniques involving gentle rocking of different body masses. "The name 'harmonic technique' is derived from that physical phenomenon called harmonic motion. This describes the rhythmic and cyclical motion of an object between spatial positions. Such patterns of movement are common to many structures in nature, including the human body. In the body, different tissues and masses display their own distinct rhythmic patterns, which are apparent during movement. These patterns are elicited during harmonic technique by applying periodic force to the patient's passive body. As these oscillations are associated with cyclical motion of joints, they can be used as articulation or soft-tissue massage." (Lederman 2000, p3)

Comeaux also speaks of how the lineage of rhythmic motion approach was passed down from Andrew Taylor Still, the founder of Osteopathy, to his student John Martin Littlejohn, the founder of the British School of Osteopathy. Comeaux has constellated his learning from the osteopathic elders to integrate the use of oscillatory force and has named this modality as Facilitated Oscillatory Release (FOR).

Comeaux has integrated the latest theory of connective tissue research including the principles of Tensegrity, piezoelectricity, thixotropic and tonic vibratory reflex effects. With James Oschman's Living Matrix, Comeaux views the field of bioenergetics, where traditional science has viewed as 'pseudoscience'. This is especially prevalent in the field of physiotherapy, where

the majority of therapists subscribe to 'clinical reasoning' is obtained from only clinical based research and trials. Massage therapy has its same dilemma, as medical massage and rigid orthopaedic assessment is what the field know supposes as the norm. This 'pseudoscience' is at the heart of where considerable research in the past has been and is being accomplished. Especially the how and why bioenergetics phenomena exist and that it might have clinical relevance for manual therapists.

Comeaux & Oschman have long recognized how connective tissue has been known to have holographic communicative properties, and again the skeptics will argue that this is misappropriation of quantum physics to prove energetic. But this is exactly the excitement that pervades those that know how the energetic form exists and a clinical attempt to harness this form.

The form is the use of oscillation in a manual therapy setting, used for both diagnostic and treatment purposes to achieve desired clinical outcomes.

Comeaux uses FOR as a method for applying oscillatory force in a treatment sequence intended to normalize muscle tone and articular balance in traumatized or strained tissue.

At the 2nd International Fascia Congress held in Amsterdam October 2009, Comeaux demonstrated FOR to a group of scientists to stimulate a dialogue finding the mechanisms for the oscillatory technique. FOR is used for reversal of restricted motion (restore mobility) resulting from trauma and strain.

Comeaux noted that the FOR is a controlled a technique directed towards specific tissue with a specific goal, not just a general broad technique. It is a localized

specific diagnostic. However it is not used by its own, but can complement and be integrated with other techniques.

He hypothesized FOR works by the following mechanism:

- Engagement of body's endogenous rhythmic character. The body has an oscillation property: the peripheral and central nervous system. It is also called the tonic vibratory reflex.
- Conditioning by repetitive stretch which can induce the change in fascial tissue fibrin matrix .
- Pumping intra-compartmental fluids.
- Psychogenic, inducing relaxation.
- Enhanced Parasympathetic response.

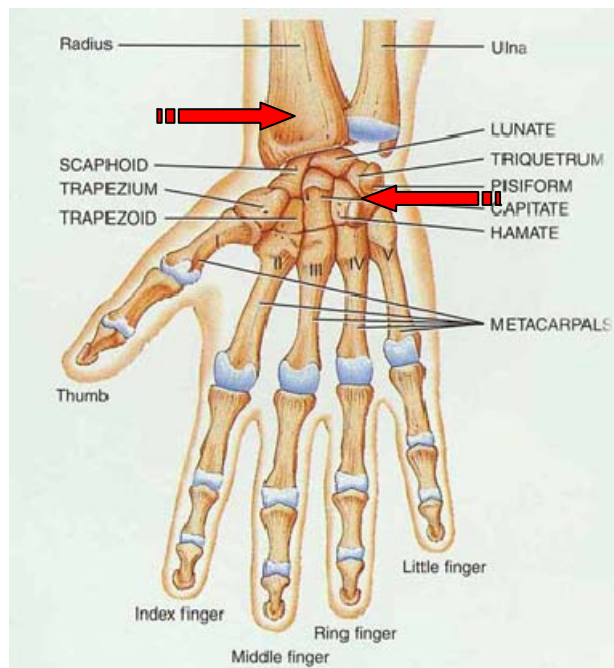
The Use of Oscillatory Technique

The ability to effectively utilize oscillation comes first with comfort in the practitioners own body.

Beginning therapists must find a state of fluid relaxation in their own body with a preferred state of a quiet inquisitive mind. When utilizing vibration or oscillation, and one will find oscillation to be more desirable in application than that of static vibrations, the practitioner strives to harness the laws of physics. Moving a body mass is harnessing the patient's own body, instead of supplying all the force from the practitioner.

The practitioner must have an awareness of the effect the oscillatory motion is having on the client in a general autonomic sense, and how this action can target specific soft-tissue structures or regions.

Do not underestimate the effect this motion has upon the body. Lederman states, "Probably the most important clinical development in harmonic technique has come from studies in disciplines outside of manual therapy. These studies have examined the effects of passive motion on the repair process in the body and have demonstrated the importance of passive movement as a stimulus for normal homeostasis of connective and muscle tissue. Following injury, passive movement has been demonstrated to improve the quality of repair in articular surfaces, muscles, tendons and skin, as well as the revascularization of the healing tissue. Passive intermittent compression has been shown to be a potent stimulus for fluid flow in the body, and important in treating inflammation and ischaemia where there is an impediment to flow." (Lederman 2000, Harmonic Technique p.3)



Oscillatory technique can be applied anywhere on the body. Upper and lower extremity, using rhythmic rocking, shaking or jostling, or moving the axial spine by mass oscillation.

Practical exercise

Locate a joint that feels restricted. Let's look at the wrist for a moment.

First assess in a normal anatomical manner, passive range of motion at the wrist. This would include wrist flexion and extension, ulnar and radial deviation. Also assess radial pronation and supination for the forearm and elbow.

Next use passive accessory motion assessment by stabilizing the radius and ulna with one hand and attempting to assess anterior-posterior, lateral distraction or displacement, compression and distraction directions whilst holding the distal carpal row.

Once your assessment is complete, decide upon an oscillatory technique. Perhaps limb shaking, or light jostling of the wrist, or gentle moving the wrist through the various ranges of motion by fluttering or moving the hand. What you find is that due to the sophistication of articular receptor, usually both the quality of articular motion and the quality of soft-tissue tonus will change.

You could rest the forearm on the table in a handshake position with a relaxed elbow joint and attempt to role the radius over the ulna by applying movement to the brachioradialis.

Get the rhythm

All rhythmic actions will usually have slight to strong effect on the tissues.

Before long to can target the type of oscillation to achieve quite specific results. Have Fun and Experiment with rhythm!

Steven will be introducing his own Oscillatory Vibratory Workshop the second half of 2011.

Visit his website for details www.fascialrelease.com or email: stevgold51@optusnet.com.au

References



Steven Goldstein, an American émigré to Australia in 1999, resides in Melbourne, Australia, where he holds a Bachelor of Health Science in Musculoskeletal Therapy and Bachelor of Arts in Education. He is an innovative massage educator instructing his

unique blend of direct myofascial, indirect osteopathic releasing methods and somatic approaches known as Integrative Fascial Release (IFR) internationally since 1995.

Steven regularly teaches IFR and Oscillatory Movement to manual therapists, osteopaths, and physiotherapists in Australia, Poland, and London.