

The Healing Power of Remedial Massage... a Real Buzz!

By David Hall, Qualified Massage Therapist

It always gives me a buzz when a massage patient with a long-standing or quite painful ailment says my treatment has fixed the problem when other types of health care have been unsuccessful or made little difference.

It is even more heartening if the patient already has had an array of x-rays, ultrasounds and other scans and nothing has been able to pinpoint the problem - or suggest a solution - from a medical perspective. In one recent case, a patient had said she almost cried with the ongoing pain from a shoulder problem.

Pain Compounded.

The pain was compounded psychologically because it heavily restricted her ability to participate in and enjoy her favourite sport, outrigger canoeing.

After several massage sessions, her original sharp pain has been reduced to the occasional twinge.

She can still train heavily about three times a week and compete regularly in outrigger events. There is nothing magic (although it might seem that way to a patient) in the solutions remedial massage can offer for long-standing muscular aches and pains.

To the masseur, it simply is a matter of looking at the big picture of a problem - not just at treating the symptom (where you feel the pain). This means taking into account - and treating - all the possible or likely contributing factors.

For example, in the case of the shoulder, a masseur also needs to treat down into the lower back. This is to ensure spinal muscles are loose enough for the spine to flex to allow the shoulder blade to rotate as required.

Hip Tilt.

It may also mean treating hip flexor muscles across the front of the hips. These may be tight and cause forward and/or sideways tilting of the hips and subsequently affect lower back spinal and other muscles.

The "magic" is that the patient has actually taken the decision to try a remedial massage rather than just rely on traditionally more widely accepted types of



treatment which are often nowhere near as effective. Patients who have never had a massage before are usually surprised at what they learn, particularly as most qualified and competent therapists take the time to explain their techniques and **why** they work.

In looking at the "big picture," a qualified masseur considers the type of work a person does, the type of regular activities or sport they engage in and various other factors indicating the range of muscles they use regularly or heavily.

Muscle Indicators.

For example, mere mention of outrigger canoeing immediately points to a range of shoulder girdle and other muscles likely to be involved.

By treating ALL these muscles and improving their flexibility, the **cause** of the problem usually disappears - and the **symptoms** along with it.

This becomes easier to understand when you consider that each muscle in the body has an opposing muscle - for example, biceps and triceps. For your biceps to flex unhindered to enable you to lift something, the triceps need to release.

If the triceps are too tight and won't release properly, the biceps have to work much harder to pull against them and may become strained and sore. So, to fix the biceps, you usually also need to loosen the triceps.

Back to Front.

If you have pain in your lower **back** it is often due to tight hip flexor muscles across the **front** of your hips which stay contracted while you are sitting (eg at a desk all day or driving long distances).

These muscles tilt the hip forwards and/or sideways, causing muscles in your lower back to also tighten - where you feel the pain.

Next time you have muscular aches and pains, consider a massage rather than popping a pain-killer pill.

A pill may alleviate the symptoms, but massage will probably also find and remove the cause.

If you'd like to know more about remedial massage, call one of our qualified therapists today.

