

Getting into a Scrape

Instrument Assisted Massage

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Some of the negatives of high performance sports and fitness training include, often continuous small niggling pains and the time required to return from injury, if you are unlucky enough to sustain one. As a performance trainer that specialises in bringing clients back from injury to high performance, I am constantly

searching for cutting edge recovery techniques. In 2010, I was invited to Colorado to participate in a course run by Dr Tom Hyde, where he demonstrated the power of using 'Instrument Assisted Massage' (IAM) in injury recovery and prevention. I took these techniques home with me and used them alongside and during my biomechanics correction training

sessions with those I work with and the results have been fantastic.

IAM is a form of massage that targets the surface fascia, the coating of muscle tissue, with three different massage techniques. IAM immediately reduces pain in an area and when applied correctly, increases motion at a rapid pace. Although the theory behind the technique is not fully proven as yet - there is some debate as to whether 1) the technique affects the fascia itself, or 2) shorts the 'pain gait feedback system' and which in combination with great biomechanics reduces or removes pain. I also discovered that some research on rats has shown for an increased speed of recovery of ligament tissue - so this may be something subsequently proven in humans at a later point.

IAM aims to improve the awareness of the injured person in terms of their movement patterns - their proprioception and sensory responses. Often an injury affects the way a person moves - this is obvious immediately post injury however, this may still be impaired relatively long into the recovery process. The result is that the person may still be moving in a less than optimal way. IAM techniques aim to return optimum movement patterns to the injured person and thus reduce the likelihood of the injury reoccurring.



Off Weight Bearing Scraping

Here Lee is using the scraping technique on the top of the big toe, in order to help his client get his body weight over his back foot, by getting range through the big toe joint. When not weight bearing the client will get some successful additional movement, however the key is to take this motion in to a weight bearing position.

The Tool

After trialing a number of tools, I settled for the 'Dolphin' (www.lamtools.co.uk). The tool is key as it enables the IAM practitioner to apply preciseness and a level of sensitivity and control that would not be possible with the hands, for example.

When purchasing the product I spent hours being informed about the importance of the metal, the shape of the tool to fit the fingers of the user to allow optimum feedback and also the type of bevel. If you are interested in the level of details the manufacturers go to then read the tools specification article on their website. On my personal massage tool, I required a thin shape so I can use a pencil type grip. And I have a double bevel around the tool, which allows me to massage back and forth, rather than come off the skin and go back to my start position.



The tool in action

According to Dr Tom Hyde, the key to using this technique is to massage while moving. It's crucial that the client feels what is happening in the tissue around the area that is being worked on. This will switch back on their proprioception mechanisms, so that their body literally becomes more aware of how it is moving.

Initial Assessment

In the picture Lee is feeling for the correct sequencing of movement and joint range in a functional motion - specifically how well the back foot leaves the floor when running.



Weight Bearing Range of Motion Scraping

In this photo, you can see another Faster trainer Elliott working with a client in a weight bearing position using a stretch cage. This provides support for the client and allows him to move through his knee and get the motions that he would while walking or running.

Scraping in Motion – moving to the sports/fitness environment

Moving the client from the stable environment of the stretch cage to a much less predictable environment (in terms of support and balance) allows the client to find positions and intensities that mimic running in different environments and where pain, or range may prove a challenge. Getting the client to move, while scraping, is the final part of training sequence in the studio. Doing this will provide the client with the best chance to go on and train and in this case run, pain free.



A final thought

In discussions with a further rehab expert Dr Nick Studholme, we discussed the reasoning behind using additional taping after IAM. Nick shared with me that he has most success with taping after a scraping session, such as the one I have just described in this article. With this in mind, I thought it was important to indicate that we may finish an IAM session with some taping to help the client perceive more neural activity or muscular activity. As with the scraping technique, we have discovered the results to be highly encouraging.