

## **HELPING THE OVER 60 POPULATION MAINTAIN THEIR LEVEL OF ACTIVITY AND QUALITY OF LIFE**

*By Don McCann, MA, LMT, LMHC, CSETT*

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There are a number of considerations when working with the over 60 population. The majority of them are going to be more active than any previous over 60 population we have seen. This includes those who have major degeneration and health issues as more and more will be receiving surgeries to either repair or replace joints in their bodies. In addition, many more will have had spinal surgeries. Health wise there will be many who will still remain active thanks to medical procedures and assistance even though they have had major heart conditions or other system failures. As massage therapists we need to be able to support the increasing over 60 population who are going to be active regardless of the above mentioned aging complications.

In this article we will concentrate on those who have not had major surgeries or joint replacements. They appear to be leading happy active lives but often they are just a single injury waiting to happen. This may sound dire but it is closer to the truth than not. Understanding that they have lived their entire lives with a degenerating structural condition called the core distortion sheds light on the fragility of their structure and joints.

According to Dr. Terry Yokum, a well-known Chiropractic Radiologist, a normal infant at one year has acetabula angles with an average of 20 degree imbalanced anterior / posterior rotation resulting in a tilting sacrum<sup>1</sup>. For the over 60 population 60 years of life happens and the acetabula angles increase along with the rotations of the iliums. This leads to an imbalance at the base of the spine which produces an exaggerated curvature throughout the spine. This exaggerated curvature puts uneven pressures on the discs and vertebrae which results in degeneration of the disc and lipping and spurring of the vertebrae. Also, the anterior / posterior rotation of the iliums results in a functional long leg / short leg discrepancy which creates imbalances and compensations unique to each leg with distortions found in the knees, ankles and feet. These distortions create uneven wear and tear on the cartilage, ligaments and tendons and eventual irritation leading to inflammation, calcium deposits and arthritis. Further complicating this picture of the legs is that due to the distortions half of the muscle groups affecting each joint of the legs are operating at 50% or less strength and flexibility. All of this sets the joint up for injuries and degeneration. Looking at the spine the distortions in the spine create imbalances in the shoulders and internal rotation of the arms. These distortions also produce uneven wear and tear and 50% or less strength and flexibility of the muscles governing the shoulders, elbows, wrists and hands. Finally, the cranium also has imbalances in the movement of the cranial bones. TMJ and headaches which are directly related to the imbalances in the cranium are just two of the conditions that can keep the over 60 away from active lives. There are more weaknesses and imbalances but we have covered the main areas.

The core distortion needs to be brought back into full support to prevent major structural issues. When we look at the core distortion we see the major weight bearing joint for the spine - the

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<sup>1</sup> ESSENTIALS OF SKELETAL RADIOLOGY, Vol. 1, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Terry R. Yochum, BS, DC, DACBR, FCCR, (C), FICC, and Lindsay J. Rowe, M. App. Sc. (Chiropractic), M.D., DACBR, FCCR, (C), FACC. (AUS), FICC, Williams & Wilkins 1996, pg 175, Table 2.26, pg 176, Table 2.27, 2.28

sacrum and ilium - as a key for slowing down or reversing the exaggerated curvatures causing degeneration and weakness leading to injuries to the spine. Bringing the iliums into a lesser degree of anterior / posterior rotation can restore balance to the sacrum providing weight bearing support. As the sacrum becomes balanced it provides level support (versus tipped non-weight bearing support in the core distortion) for the spine resulting in reducing the curvatures of the spine. The support of the sacrum and the lessening of the spinal curvatures slows down or even stops the degeneration taking place in the discs and the vertebrae due to the uneven pressures of the spinal curvatures as these curvatures decrease once the sacrum becomes level. This is vital for this population to remain fully active.

As previously mentioned the core distortion is also found in the movement and organization of the cranial bones. There are relationships between the cranial bones and the pelvis that are extremely important. The anterior / posterior rotation of the iliums is reflected in the cranial motion by the sphenoid, and the tippage and rotation of the sacrum is reflected in the occiput. Since movement patterns in the cranium are governed by connective tissue (fascia, reciprocal tension membrane and dura) soft tissue treatments focusing on the cranial motion can produce changes. Thus, by releasing the soft tissue restrictions that are holding the core distortion in the cranium it is possible to reduce the rotation of the iliums and bring the sacrum/ilium relationship back into weight bearing support for the spine. For many this is the missing link.

As the rotations of the iliums is decreased with the application of the Cranial/Structural Core Distortion Releases (CSCDR) the leg lengths become equal. This has far reaching implications for those over 60 in protecting and maintaining the health of the joints of the legs and feet. As the leg length equalizes the distortion at the joints is minimized and pressure on the cartilages and ligaments becomes more even. This slows down and often stops further destructive uneven wear and tear at the joints. This also reduces irritation which is one of the principal causes of arthritis. Consequently, clients who might have had to limit their activities due to pain and inflammation are often able to continue their active lives without further damage to the joints of their legs and feet. Also, with improved alignment there is much less likelihood of falls, sprains and strains.

Another significant advantage of releasing the core distortion and bringing the iliums into balance with the CSCDR is that the muscles that were working at a 50% or less function and efficiency will significantly improve in function and strength. This leads to fewer muscle injuries, more stability of joints, increased balance, and better overall performance in their physical activities. The increased strength and function of the muscles also prevents injuries and wear and tear at the joints, actually allowing for an even more active life for the over 60 population.

## **CASE STUDY**

Eugene, a relatively active 68 year old ex-administrator, was reaching the point that every time he played tennis it was taking him up to a week before his body felt ready to play again due to pain and stiffness in his back and legs. Postural analysis at Eugene's first session revealed a significant rotation in the iliums, long leg/short leg discrepancy, and spinal curvatures from the ongoing degeneration of the core distortion of 68 years of active living. The CSCDR was applied to bring the iliums out of rotation into balance, provide weight bearing support for the

sacrum and spine, and even his leg lengths. He immediately experienced an increase in strength and function in the muscles of his legs, back, arms and shoulders and felt he was stronger than he had been in years. Specialized soft tissue myofascial Structural Energetic Therapy® protocols were applied to his legs, pelvis and low back to treat the chronic myofascial holding patterns, shortened muscles, adhesions and scar tissue. Eugene was treated weekly for six weeks during which he reported less discomfort and pain and an increase in how long and how often he could play tennis. After the fifth session Eugene reported that he had no soreness even though he had played an extra set of singles in tennis after his normal three sets of doubles. Eugene was also very excited at how he was moving around the court and reaching balls that had previously been out of reach. He was then scheduled once every two weeks for three sessions and once every three weeks for two sessions at which point Eugene was maintaining a higher level of performance in tennis with none of the pain and discomfort that he had experienced for years.

Eugene is a representative case of what happens when an active over 60 year old has the CSCDR applied followed by specialized myofascial techniques to bring his body into balance and function. He spent a lifetime in the core distortion with his body falling further into imbalance and weakening to the point of pain and dysfunction. Eugene had been on the verge of sustaining a major injury to his back, pelvis or leg due to the collapsing of the core distortion. When the core distortion was brought back into weight bearing support and the leg lengths were equalized, the distortions of the spine, legs, joints, shoulders and arms were brought into balance and strengthened. Additionally, significant increases of strength and function to at least 50% of the muscles that had been affected by the core distortion enhanced his performance in tennis and stabilized the major joints of his body.

Understanding the core distortion and how to effectively treat it with the CSCDR integrated with specialized soft tissue myofascial techniques can produce incredible benefits for active people over the age of 60.

