

The Bowen Technique

Pelvic area treatment

by Janie Godfrey with material by Julian Baker

When a client arrives with pain radiating down the front of the leg and causing pain through the shinbone and pain affecting the lateral border of the foot, it is hard to know if it is the sciatic or femoral nerve that is being affected.

The usual causes of femoral nerve pain are direct trauma, prolonged pressure on the nerve, and compression of the nerve by nearby body structures or pathologic structures (such as a tumour). Prolonged pressure may be complicated by lack of oxygen from decreased blood flow in the area and other factors such as a hernia can affect the nerve. There may be weakness on straightening the knee or bending at the hip, which might also indicate femoral nerve involvement.

However it could also be the cutaneous nerve of the thigh that is involved as well and this shares a lot of common ground with the sciatic nerve. In either case however we come back to our old friend the piriformis, a muscle that runs from the sacrum (mid-line base of spine) to the outer hip bone (trochanter).

This small muscle is responsible for so many common presentations that therapists regularly see. Gluteal muscles that are constantly contracting, trying to support the back, hammer it. Piriformis Syndrome accounts for the vast majority of what is often referred to as 'sciatica', with the pain into the foot being a clear indication of this.

In addressing this with The Bowen Technique, the pelvic procedure is the obvious one to give. This can be preceded by the moves that Bowen therapists call 'Page 1, 3 & 4', which move over an overlap of gluteus medius and gluteus maximus where a small ridge or lump can be felt with palpation. If piriformis is in spasm, these moves - repeated three times with good breaks in between - can often take the spasm out.

However, in pain presentations such as described above, one of the most frequently used Bowen approaches is the Pelvic Procedure. This is also used to correct pelvic imbalances, torsions, rotations, leg length etc. It consists of a set of four moves for each side of the body and is one of the most dynamic and remarkable of the Bowen procedures. It is also one that never ceases to amaze those who see its often immediate effects.

The Pelvic Procedure uses four muscles in its basic set up; vastus lateralis, sartorius, adductor longus and inguinal ligament. Additions to the procedure will include rectus femoris, biceps femoris and rectus abdominus.

As with all procedures, the moves are fairly gentle and the whole of the Pelvic Procedure takes less than two minutes to perform. In addition to rapidly adjusting the pelvis, the process will also release piriformis and is very useful for bladder and reproductive imbalances.

Two case histories illustrate the remarkable effects the Bowen pelvic area moves can make:

Classic sciatica, man aged 40 - 1 treatment

Peter was unable to put weight on his right foot and the therapist paid a home visit. He was in severe pain and had been all day, from the buttock right down the leg. He was extremely tense and tight. The therapist gave him one treatment and was able to observe his body relaxing during the 40-minute session. He was virtually pain free when he got up and was walking normally. Two years later, the therapist reports that the problem has not returned.

Back: degenerative disc, woman, 30's - several treatments

Barbara had pain in her lower and middle back with some spasm evident, plus stiffness around her shoulders. She had had a lower back injury as a child. She also suffered from stress. She had three children between 8 months and 4 years. She was moving house shortly after her second treatment. The pain in her back disappeared after the second treatment when the Bowen pelvic move was added and, despite carrying many heavy boxes during the move, she had no problems with her back. As the Bowen treatment is helping with her stress, this has continued. In her own words:

"I have been diagnosed with degenerative disc disorder and have suffered for 12 years with lower back pain which has worsened since my children were born. "All summer long, the pain was severe and occurred frequently, often with the pain going down into my legs and also up my neck and shoulder. After two sessions of Bowen it was almost completely relieved. Since then I had slight twinges, which have gone after a few days."

For further information or a list of accredited practitioners contact:

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