



## What is Integrative Manual Therapy?

**IMT Wellness Center**

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## **Introduction**

Integrative Manual Therapy (IMT) is a unique compilation of diagnostic and treatment methodologies that assess and treat pain, dysfunction, disease and disability. Developed by Sharon Giammatteo, Ph.D., IMTC and Thomas Giammatteo, DC, ND, PT, Ph.D.-IMTC over the past 30 years, IMT is a new approach to health care developed to address the needs of complex patients. IMT practitioners identify and address the underlying causes of dysfunction using a comprehensive and holistic approach. While IMT diagnostics and treatment modalities are predominately hands-on, IMT also integrates a wide range of diagnostic and treatment technologies, nutritional programs (i.e. natural supplements, diet and herbs), and IMT body based psychotherapeutic approaches to develop a customized solution for an individual patient's needs.

IMT treatment techniques are based on the premise that the body has the potential to self-correct or heal itself under the right circumstances. Tissue repair at the cellular level is a normal process that occurs within the body. The healing of a cut or wound on the skin, or a broken bone that heals itself once it has been immobilized, are two examples of this mechanism at work. Pain and dysfunction, on the other hand, are an indication that there is too much cell or tissue dysfunction for the body to restore health on its own. Under these circumstances, in order to improve the body's self-correction mechanisms, intervention is required.

IMT treatment techniques are manual (hands-on), and generally involve gentle manipulative techniques to promote tissue repair, normalize structure and restore function. Unique to IMT is the integration of manual therapy techniques for all systems in the body (i.e. bone, nerve, fascia, muscle, organ, lymph and circulatory systems). As each tissue type in the body has unique requirements for healing, tissue specific techniques are used to yield optimal results. Often multiple systems are addressed to facilitate recovery, as a dysfunction in one system may influence or be influenced by a problem in another system. To illustrate, consider a patient with chronic shoulder pain. Upon being assessed to determine which structures were contributing to their pain and /or dysfunction, treatment would ensue for the affected systems. As determined by the diagnostic findings. Ultimately, IMT is the integration of techniques to assess and address all systems in the body.

IMT practitioners come from many health care disciplines, including Western medicine, physical therapy, chiropractic, occupational therapy naturopathy, acupuncture, Chinese medicine and other fields. Most IMT trained therapists practice IMT as a specialization, and integrate IMT into their regular health care practices, including in private clinics and hospitals. Practitioners and patients alike have discovered IMT in the process of searching for more sustainable answers to their specific health care needs.

IMT is a comprehensive solution that benefits all types of patients. In many cases, patients who seek IMT have undergone previous treatments with limited success and find IMT to be a sustainable answer to their health care needs. IMT practitioners specialize in treating complex patients. IMT treats such ailments as chronic back pain, migraine headaches, learning disabilities, autism, diabetes, sports related injuries, chronic fatigue, fertility and women's health

needs, cerebral palsy, spinal cord injuries, depression, anxiety and many other problems. In addition, many patients use IMT preventatively to maintain optimal health. Ultimately, the success and continued growth of IMT rests on attaining and maintaining results.

With IMT Wellness Center offices and trained practitioners around the world, IMT offers patients the opportunity for recovery, rehabilitation and prevention as an alternative and/or complement to other health care disciplines.

## **Diagnostics**

IMT practitioners assess patients by using manual diagnostic techniques. IMT diagnostics assess the body's numerous anatomic and physiologic systems independently as well as investigate how these systems are interrelated for each patient's pattern of dysfunction or disease. The diagnostics evaluate various inherent rhythms in the body (also known as biologic rhythms, circadian rhythms or motilities). Just as a doctor might use a heartbeat to gain information about the heart and the cardiovascular system, so too an IMT therapist measures inherent anatomical and physiologic rhythms to assess different systems in the body (i.e. lymphatic, nervous, fascial, circulatory system). For example, the lymphatic system has a distinct rhythm which can be used to identify inadequate immune support within lymph vessels or at lymph nodes.

However, unique to IMT is the ability to discern the state of the body on the basis of these rhythms. IMT total body diagnostics often broaden the scope of investigation from a seemingly local problem to a more regional, systemic and/or multi-system dysfunction. To illustrate, consider a patient who suffers from chronic migraine headaches. An IMT practitioner would assess the patient by identifying all areas in the body that are contributing to the problem. This would include dysfunction at obvious local sites such as the joints and muscles at the head and neck, but might also include breakdowns at the joints of the pelvis, sacrum and spine, a blood flow insufficiency locally or systemically, tension within the nervous system, an immune system breakdown or a combination of all or any of these problems. Ultimately, IMT diagnostics determine the origin and/or the underlying cause(s) of pain or dysfunction, as well as the hierarchy in which treatment should ensue for optimal results.

In addition to manual diagnostics, IMT practitioners may also integrate diagnostic tools based on their previous or on-going training, enhancing the multidisciplinary model of treatment used by IMT. These may include Bone Densitometer, Biomeridian (EAV testing), Ultrasound, NAET allergy testing, Korr, Lab Testing and more.

In developing IMT, over the past 30 years, Sharon and Tom Giammatteo and other IMT practitioners have thoroughly examined and observed various patterns of pain, disability and disease. While some patients will exhibit these patterns, others will exhibit unique presentations of dysfunction. Ultimately, the IMT diagnostic approach will enable the practitioners to develop a customized treatment plan for an individual.

## **Treatment**

IMT treatment builds off of a diagnostic foundation to create a personalized treatment plan that balances a patient's short term and long term goals and needs and will evolve throughout a patient's engagement period with IMT clinics or practitioners. The IMT approach is results oriented and interactive. The patient and the practitioner constantly monitor and re-assess progress through indicators such as increased function, improvements in the patient's inherent biological rhythms, enhanced ranges of motion, reduction of pain, increased cognition, and/or normalized behavioral and emotional responses. A typical IMT treatment plan integrates manual therapies, nutritional counseling (i.e. natural supplements, diet and herbs) and IMT body based psychotherapeutic methods.

As already stated, IMT treatment techniques are hands-on and generally involve gentle manipulative techniques to promote tissue repair, normalize structure and restore function. More specifically, IMT techniques generally put specific forces or torques into the tissues in order to create an environment within those tissues which is conducive for tissue repair to occur. An example of an IMT treatment technique for fascia or connective tissue dysfunction is IMT's Myofascial Release Technique. The technique involves testing tissue glides on multiple planes and then manipulating those tissues on three planes, following the direction of least resistance. The practitioner then holds the fulcrum that these manipulations have created and monitors the tissues as they unwind under their hands. This technique attains an elongation of the fibers within the connective tissue as well as a normalization of the density and viscosity from within the surrounding connective tissue.

IMT addresses both anatomy and physiology. The treatment of anatomy includes manual techniques for bones, ligaments, discs, nerves, arteries, veins, organs and more. To date, the Giammatteo's and their colleagues have developed thousands of techniques to improve these structures. Treatment plans incorporate these techniques as necessary based on diagnostic indications. The treatment of physiology, to promote normalization of biochemistry, uses both manual therapy and nutritional wellness programs. This may include treatments targeting hormones, sleep cycles, metabolism, stress responses, etc. IMT's body based psychotherapeutic approach involves specific techniques such as manual techniques, dialogue and visualization to decrease emotional and mental stress in the body.

In addition to manual treatment techniques, IMT practitioners may also integrate treatment tools based on their previous or on-going training. These may include Ultrasound, Detoxification foot bath, Endermolgie, Therapeutic laser, Muscia Medica, Functional exercise and circuit training equipment, Acupuncture and Chinese herbs and more.

A unique feature of IMT, and one that sets it apart in the field of rehabilitation, is in the way it integrates structural and functional rehabilitation approaches. Traditional rehabilitation generally focuses on optimizing function (i.e. strength, balance, range of motion), despite the fact that a patient may have structures (i.e. ligament, disc, bone, blood vessels) which are comprised. While functional approaches play an integral role in the rehabilitation process, clinical results show that

to obtain optimal healing and rehabilitation both in the short and long term, structural integrity should be first be restored to the damaged structure and then function can be optimized.

To illustrate the difference, functional approaches would address strength, balance, and movement to a leg following knee surgery for a torn ligament. IMT structural techniques, on the other hand, might first decrease the swelling at the joint, enhance the healing of the torn ligaments, improve blood flow into and out of the knee, and decrease the inflammation at the joint capsule prior to implementing any functional techniques. Once structural integrity has been restored to the structures at the knee, the potential for function of the knee, and the entire leg, will be much greater. Functional rehabilitation will build on structural improvements to optimize, for example, balance in standing, walking and running, and the strength of the muscles in the knee and leg. The distinction between functional and structural rehabilitation approaches is akin to tuning the strings of a piano before learning how to play the piano.

To further illustrate, consider a child with developmental disabilities. The child may have problems with speech, learning, cognition, and attention. The integration of structural IMT techniques to normalize such things as blood flow into and out of the brain, their immune system function, lung function to optimize oxygen utilization, the nerves that innervate the tongue and the muscles of speech and swallowing, and their gut to better extract nutrients from the food that they take in, will all ultimately improve the child's potential for function. Functional rehabilitation is integrated into the program for this type of child, so that as their structure begins to work better, the functional approach teaches them how to use this 'new' potential for function.

The following examples show how the diagnostics and treatment of IMT work.

### **Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)**

A child who has trouble concentrating would be assessed using the diagnostic techniques outlined above. With ADD, the practitioner would expect to find dysfunction at the frontal lobe of the brain, as the frontal lobe is responsible for intelligence, concentration, judgment, perception and attention. If however, the diagnostics did not indicate a problem at the frontal lobe, the practitioner would investigate other areas which may be contributing to the signs and symptoms. It is often the case, that the frontal lobe is being affected by dysfunction in another area. By uncovering and treating the primary site of breakdown, the signs and symptoms of ADD would begin to change. Common areas which have been found to contribute to ADD are the eyes, the occipital lobe of the brain (associated with visual perception and processing) and the ears. Even seemingly unrelated issues, such as chronic ear infections could influence ADD, and IMT diagnostics would uncover this type of connection and treat it accordingly.

### **Low Back Pain**

Another complex example might be low back pain that is not responding to treatment. An IMT practitioner would widen the scope of investigation beyond the muscles and bones at the low back, to see what other structures were contributing to symptoms. It is common to find the organs which sit in close proximity to the low back contributing to low back pain. For instance, both the sigmoid colon (the end of the colon) and the cecum and ileocecal valve (the beginning

of the colon) are often implicated. They often exhibit dysfunction due to a gastrointestinal problem and may have lost their integrity, resulting in a 'leaky gut' syndrome. Treatment techniques to restore integrity to these structures, coupled with nutritional counseling are often highly effective at reducing chronic and stubborn presentations of low back pain.

Alternatively, diagnostics may point to the source of the problem being a multi-systems breakdown at the low back region, where dysfunction in bone, disc, joint, nerve, blood vessels and organ may all be involved. IMT has specific techniques for addressing each of these types of structures. A customized treatment plan would again combine manual therapy to normalize the structures involved, with nutritional counseling to optimize the physiology of the structures involved.

### **Chronic Fatigue**

As with all dysfunction, total body diagnostics would be done to discern the pattern of dysfunction for a given patient. Common patterns contributing to chronic fatigue include a breakdown of one or more of the structures of the immune system, the circulatory system, the detoxification and/or the elimination systems. A treatment plan might include manual therapy techniques to normalize and in turn optimize function of lymph nodes, arterial and venous blood flow, the liver and kidneys for detoxification and the colon for elimination. Dietary recommendations and natural supplements would be given to normalize the physiology or the biochemistry of the structures involved. Furthermore, IMT body based psychotherapeutic approaches would be integrated into treatment sessions to decrease mental and emotional stresses.

### **The IMT Organization**

The IMT Wellness Center is headquartered in West Hartford, CT.

IMT seminars are presented through the Connecticut School of Integrative Manual Therapy (CSIMT).

Connecticut School of Integrative Manual Therapy (CSIMT) has trained hundreds of health care and rehabilitation professionals in IMT diagnostics and treatment techniques. Today, many of our students practice IMT as a specialization and integrate IMT into their regular health care practices. IMT therapists continually update their skills through regular seminars and on-site mentoring with the faculty of CSIMT. Our graduates may also have M.S., Ph.D., D. Sci. degrees and work in private practices, physical therapy clinics, occupational therapy clinics, etc.

In 2001, the Connecticut School of Integrative Manual Therapy became authorized as a private occupational school in the state of CT. The 3 year diploma program trains health care and non-health care professionals to be experts in the field of diagnostics and treatment of IMT. Following completion of the diploma program, graduates are eligible to sit for certification and become Certified IMT practitioners. This certification program is affiliated with Westbrook University.

Research and development at the IMT Wellness Center is constant. New techniques and protocols are created on a regular basis, based on clinical research and patient care. Currently, there are many IMT practitioners who are focusing their doctoral research on the field of IMT. This research is focused across all patient populations and includes research into the fields of autism, spinal cord injury, and Parkinson's.

The Integrative Manual Therapy Association (IMTA) was established in August of 2003. The IMTA is a professional association for IMT practitioners. It supports individual practitioners, and promotes IMT as a health care profession. Our goal for the future is to launch IMT Global Health, which will be a foundation that subsidizes special clinical programs in IMT, prepares grants for clinical research and patient care funding, and supports clinical research in IMT.

As IMT continues to evolve, it aims to extend its reach globally and to other health care disciplines. True to its multi-disciplinary origins, IMT will continue to communicate with, learn from and train professionals from all health care disciplines in order to ultimately provide patients with optimal care.

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