



The Hendrickson Method

by Sue Bennett

Mine is a practical hands-on approach. However, one book that has had an extraordinary effect on both the way I work and my professional life, has been the book by Dr Tom Hendrickson. Over the last few years I have moved from being an admirer of his methods, to actively promoting them among my fellow practitioners.

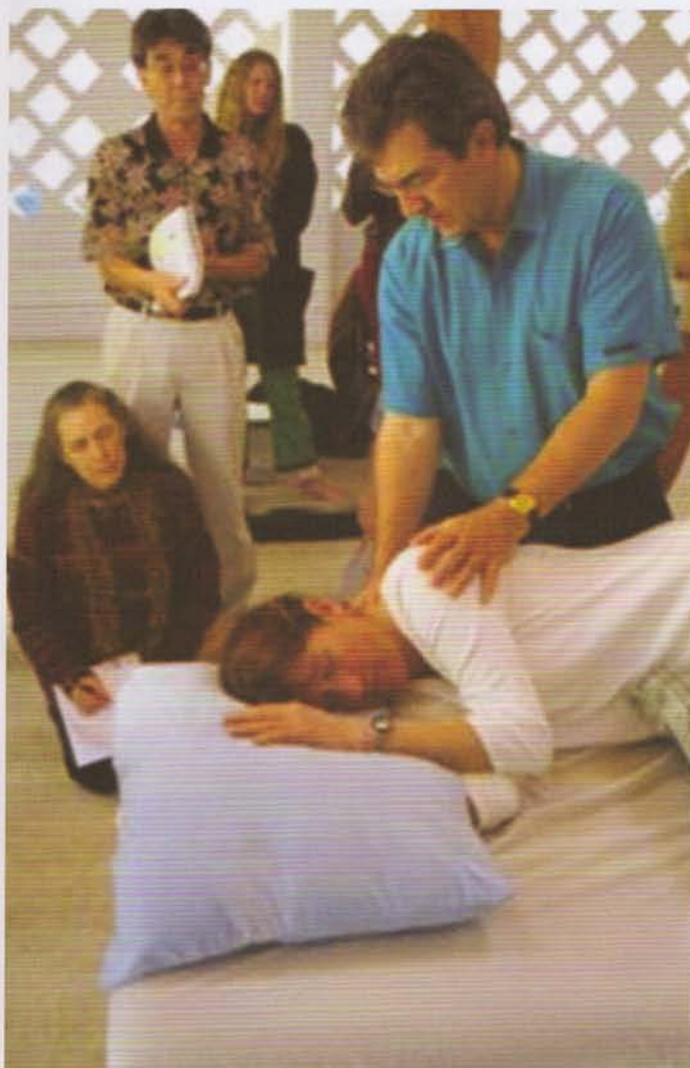
The story started when I read Tom Hendrickson's book about his methodology. Tom wrote about an advanced system of orthopaedic therapy that brings together a number of techniques I was already using: massage, mobilisation, and neuromuscular re-education, combined using Eastern energy practices.

Key to his way of working was the use of the therapist's own body as a tool for delivering a new style of massage he called 'Wave Mobilisation'. I was interested in both the unique style of massage and the highly ergonomic approach to giving a massage.

Tom's unique method

Tom explains the method well, 'Clients receive a gentle session that provides pain-relief and functional rehabilitation. Precise and extremely effective, Hendrickson Method is suitable therapy for most orthopaedic conditions including low back pain, whiplash, and rotator cuff injuries. With long-term benefits far beyond what is possible with massage, this exceptional system of functional rehabilitation uses techniques that stimulate the synthesis of new cells, rehydrate cartilage, and realign soft tissue. At its core is a one-of-a-kind stroke called wave mobilisation®, so named because its gentle rocking motion mimics ocean waves.'

Hendrickson's Orthopaedic Massage allows the therapist to use minimum muscular effort and reduces the stress and strains associated with overuse. Hendrickson's emphasis on the influence of Tai Chi allows the therapist to



maximise effect and yet limit exertion. The method also allows a treatment to be given through clothing, broadening the spectrum of patients that can be treated. The method was clear about the importance of taking a full history and ensuring any treatment was in context for the individual.

newtechnique

the hendrickson method

A lifetime of development

Tom Hendrickson's own professional journey began over 30 years ago and has been influenced by a host of practitioners. Tom began studying massage in 1972 as part of a teacher's training course in yoga. That was when he began to see the transformative power of touch. After training in Shiatsu and a four-month training programme in Lomi work he met Lauren Berry in 1978. This was a turning point.

Berry had over 50 years' experience and very practical approach changed the way Tom looked at massage, and resulted in an influential book published in 1981, just shortly before Berry died.

Although a follower of Berry's techniques, Tom found the high-speed soft-tissue and joint manipulations lacked relaxational qualities - they were a little aggressive and invasive - what's more they were extremely strenuous for the therapist. He recalls, 'It was my personal goal to be as gentle as possible without sacrificing therapeutic results.'

Over many years' practice Tom developed what he called 'interfascicular torsion' to describe the tiny adhesions and twists he could feel with his hands, and developed techniques to 'unwind' these segments.

This is when he began looking at the ergonomics of massage - changing the position of the patient on the table to allow a more upright delivery of massage, and beginning the use of a rhythmic oscillation - a wave-like motion that is now a fundamental part of his approach.

Tom also incorporates the work of James Cyriax, whose work on transverse friction has had such a profound influence on soft-tissue treatments, and Rosalyn Bruyere and Muriel Chapmen whose use of gentle touch for healing is reflected in his very gentle therapy. In particular the environmental aspects of the massage process are important to Tom, '...one of the most important goals of the therapist is to create an experience with touch that the client feels completely safe, completely comfortable. This induces a state of relaxation and trust in the client that allows for the healing of not just the physical pain but also provides an environment for the healing of the emotional and psychological components.'

First encounters

Tom's unique way of working - the Hendrickson Method - grew out from this period of study, development and practice and is described well in his book, *Massage For Orthopaedic Conditions*.

When I read the book, I was delighted and encouraged as much of what Tom was proposing found resonance in my own ideas and practice. His book was a revelation, however, the more I explored his technique, the more I became convinced that meeting Dr Hendrickson would be the best way to reach a better understanding of his approach and in 2006, I decided to visit him in California.



My journey begins

In September 2006, after a long trip - across first the Atlantic then right across the continent of North America - I arrived in Berkley California, to join Tom's class. His work and teaching style was immediately appealing. There was no ego, just a genuine, authentic way of working, and the desire to make a difference to people's lives. This was clear from his technique, but also in the way he spoke about it, demonstrated it and taught it to us. Seeing him in action was an inspiration - but with inspiration came frustration. I wanted to do it - but felt it would be some time before I could master the wave, sinking mobilisation method. Tom offers substantial, intensive training but it seemed I would not be able to take advantage of them being based in the UK.

I approached Tom and explained my predicament, and he provided a solution - I arranged to return periodically and complete a course of training over a period of a few years. This regular visit to attend Tom's workshops and sessions has become a highlight of my working year and now I have a confidence and understanding that can never come from simply studying a book.

Changing practice

The effect on my practice has been extraordinary. In terms of what I do for my clients it has changed from a one-way method, where the patient ostensibly remains static, while I manipulate and position them, to a style where the patient is involved at every stage. Initially this was a little challenging for some of the people I treat, but all of them have realised the importance of massage as an interactive activity. There is far less reliance on 'oil-work' and rubbing in general. However, the relaxational aspect of the treatment is still much in evidence as the wave motion that typifies the treatment is highly relaxing and deeply rhythmic - with result that seem far more long-lasting and positive than typical massage.

I was also quickly aware of an improvement in terms of my own stamina. The reliance on hands, poor posture in the therapist, and the repetitive actions take their toll in many practitioners. The use of Tom's method taught me new ways of touching and manipulating, as well as changing the physical approach to the patient - the result was much improved stamina and the reduction of significant stress on my hands and body.

Tom's has reinforced the importance of taking 'in depth' history which has added breadth and depth to my relationship with my clients - each individual brings with them a unique story, and understanding that story is vital if we are to develop an effective, long-lasting solution together. This dialogue also adds to the therapeutic elements of the



session, building confidence and positivity within the patient, and making them more likely to change habits outside the practice room.

An additional aspect of working in this way has been the importance of reflexive perspectives - taking a good hard look at my practice, my methods and the effects my own approach has on patients. The method provides space for personal, professional development that is not usually part of a massage technique.

I was so impressed with the effect adopting Tom's technique was having, that I decided to look for any other practitioners using the Hendrickson Method in the UK. I was astonished to find almost no-one had discovered Tom's work, and that I was one of a very few people who had experienced his teachings first hand.

"Over many years' practice Tom developed what he called 'interfascicular torsion' to describe the tiny adhesions and twists he could feel with his hands, and developed techniques to 'unwind' these segments"

newtechnique

the hendrickson method

I decided to ask Dr Hendrickson to visit the UK and conduct a compact session here in Otley, West Yorkshire. The visit - in June 2008 - culminated with a workshop during which he demonstrated his method to 28 massage therapists from all over the UK. The three-day workshop gave them an introduction to his Hendrickson Method including 'wave mobilisation'.

Dr Hendrickson was impressed by the standard of the massage therapists he met at the workshop, especially the levels of anatomical knowledge. He said, 'I am thrilled and excited at the skill and commitment I have found here, and how quickly and effectively everyone picked up what I was doing.' Feedback from the massage therapists attending the workshop showed the impact he made in such a short time. Tonia Jones of Leeds said it was 'Fantastic! ...great

support and encouragement. A privilege to be taught by such amazing practitioners'. Mark Stoll (who works with the Scottish National Football team) commented, 'My own work will only get better from this course... it was well worth the trip from Peebles.'

Massage therapist Ian Chapman commented on how generous Dr Hendrickson was with his knowledge', while Nicola Nicol said it was 'the best course I have ever been on - what an excellent few days of learning, enlightenment and good fun!'

As a result of this positive experience, Dr Hendrickson is planning to come back soon to run his 112 hour Foundation Course in Otley.

Sue Bennett is a member of the LCSP Register of Remedial Masseurs and Manipulative Therapists. In 2005 Sue was awarded a fellowship for her commitment to improving C.P.D for massage therapists.

Sue has been a member of LCSP for the last 18yrs.

The LCSP have been supportive of Sue interest in Tom's work and in her bringing his work to England.

Tom's ethics and values around massage therapy, match those of the LCSP.

There is an introduction to the 'Hendrickson Method' in March of 2009.

Training in the Fundamental's of the Hendrickson method, commencing June 2009, a 112 hr programme.

For further information:

www.flexible-healing.co.uk

or

www.lcsp.co.uk

also

www.hendricksonmethod.com

