

Brain Nobility

And Our Therapeutic Response

By Molly Clark, PT, LMT, LLCC

The brain is the most profound of organs, yet is often overlooked in manual therapy. Specific treatment of the central nervous system (CNS) often has far reaching effects throughout the body. Therefore, it is wise to include the brain in our treatment plan. As therapists we assess tissue throughout the body including musculoskeletal, fascia, ligaments, tendons and viscera. We are able to apply our manual skills to address the brain as a fluid body, an organ or as fascia. The brain is an “intelligent” tissue and responds to subtle information such as our touch. The CNS produces numerous chemicals which interact with whole body consciousness.

A.T. Still, the father of osteopathy, spoke highly concerning the brain in regards to manual therapy: *“Of all the parts of the body of man to be well studied, the brain should be the most attractive.”* [1,2].

How then, can we learn to appreciate the brain’s attractiveness?

A new paradigm for working with the brain

If you are already experienced in manual therapy i.e. cranial, lymph, or visceral work, this curriculum teaches a different paradigm and will complement your current skills by working specifically with brain nuclei, white matter, intraventricular fluid, vascular structures, cranial and spinal nerves. Students report that the brain classes fine tune their manual touch allowing them to apply this refined touch to the rest of the body.

Do you know that the substantia nigra has a different quality of palpation than the red nucleus of the midbrain? Are you aware that our hands have the potential to interact and discern these differences? As cerebral (pardon

the pun) as this may sound, through the applied study of the Brain Curriculum of the Chikly Health Institute, we can learn to feel and appreciate the varied and distinct personalities within the central nervous system.

I recently received a letter from a student reporting that the nonjudgmental palpation she learned in Brain 1 had “spilled over” into all areas of her life and enriched her life experience and relationships greatly.

The extraordinary brain

The brain is an incredible organ that comprises 1-2% of our body weight while utilizing 40% of our body’s nutrients, 30% of it’s water and 25% of the blood flow. These statistics clearly illustrate the body goes to extraordinary lengths to insure that the brain is “fed.”

The brain has approximately 100 billion neurons consisting of a quadrillion connections between them - that’s the number 1 with 15 zeros after it! Each second of the first six months of gestation two million new connections are created in the brain. The rapidity at which neural connections are made during the first 18 months of life is astonishing. Undoubtedly, a tissue of this extraordinary nobility is worthy of our attention.

Delving into neuroanatomy may initially seem overwhelming. Be assured, it is not necessary to know every detail of neuroanatomy to take this class, however familiarity with the anatomy illustrations will heighten palpation skills considerably. To assist class preparation, there is a list of Brain 1 key words on the CHI website. I recommend highlighting these in the Netter Atlas of Human Neuroscience to develop familiarity with their spatial relationships. The Brain Curriculum utilizes specific ways to access brain tissue and we have exercises throughout the coursework to build these skills.

The Brain Curriculum proposes different ways to “release” intricate neural anatomy. Once learned, it is easy to see how these brain structures are accessible, yet often overlooked key components of somatic dysfunction. For example, after an injury the brain may “protect itself” by changing an area of its tissue thus having impact on the rest of the body. I have seen patients involved in motor vehicle accidents which resulted in decreased neck mobility and sciatica. On closer examination, the cerebellum was found to be rotated, putting tension on the cerebellar peduncles, resulting in a pull throughout the meninges of the spinal cord. The effect of this tension was felt all the way to the sacrum and sciatic nerve through the core link of the filum terminale. Because the central nervous system is “central,” a tension on it can create an asymmetry into the periphery of the body. When “tensions” occur in the spine and sacrum, it can result in dysfunction in the abdominal/pelvic viscera, the knee or even the ankle. The body may align itself to protect the “noble” neurological structures. Through this therapy have incredible potential to impact specific neuroanatomy with our hands.

“I know that the normal brain lives, thinks, and moves within its own specific membranous articular mechanism.”- Sutherland WG, "The Cranial Bowl", Free Press, First Edition, 1939, reprint 1994, pp 51.

References

1. Still AT, Philosophy of Osteopathy, AT Still Kirksville Mo Pub., 1899, p 47.
2. Still AT, The Philosophy and Mechanical Principles of Osteopathy, Kansas, Mo Hudson-Kimberly Pub. Co, 1902, p 40.

For more information about Dr. Bruno Chikly’s Brain Therapy curriculum, go to ChiklyInstitute.com