LEARN TO PALPATE EFFECTIVELY

Joseph Muscolino
www.learnmuscles.com

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Introduction

• What is palpation?
  • Palpation can be defined many ways.
  • The word itself comes from Latin *palpatio*, meaning *to touch*.
  • Defining palpation as touching is too simple...
  • Palpation includes the idea of sensing/perceiving, which involves more than just the fingers.
  • It also involves the mind

Palpation involves the mind

• Palpation involves our mind/our intellect.
• We need to feel with our brains as well as our fingers.
  • *mindful touch*

Mindful touch

• All of the therapist’s correlated knowledge of anatomy must be integrated into the sensations that the therapist’s fingers are picking up from the client’s body and sending to the brain.

Two objectives of palpation

• Palpation can be stated as having two main objectives:
  • locating and discerning the *target muscle* (or target structure...)
  • assessing the health of the target muscle
• Palpation at beginning and intermediate levels is usually centered on locating the target muscle.

The key to successful palpation

• My contention is that successful palpation by the therapist is based on understanding and applying a set of guidelines...
  • *common sense guidelines*...
  • not memorizing palpation protocols!
  • The *key is critical thinking!*
Critical thinking versus not critical thinking?

- Critical thinking is often spoken of, but I am not sure how often it is actually applied...
- For most therapists, critical thinking is harder at first because it requires thinking about and understanding some abstract concepts.
- At first, it is much easier to simply be given a palpation protocol and memorize it.
- But as protocol after protocol is added on, it becomes increasingly hard to memorize them all.
- And, there is little ability to critically think and creatively apply the knowledge.

Guidelines

- The Art and Science of Palpation... ;)

First, a few preliminary guidelines...

- Move slowly...
- Quality of palpation touch...
- Use appropriate pressure...
- When do we palpate?

The science of palpation

- #1: Know the attachments.
  - Why do we need to know the attachments of the muscle?
- #2: Know the actions.
  - Why do we need to know the action(s) of the muscle?

Example: deltoid

Importance of anatomy!

- Other than having “good hands”...
  - Knowing anatomy is the foundation for all manual and movement therapies!
  - It certainly is the foundation for clinical / medical / orthopedic / rehabilitation work!!!
  - massage therapy study...
- Order of thought (critical thinking):
  - Anatomy - Physiology/Kinesiology - Pathophysiology - Assessment - Treatment.
Beginning the art of palpation

- #3: Choose the best action of the target muscle to make it contract. Why?
- #4: Add resistance.

“Isolating” a contraction of the target muscle

- When adding resistance, never cross a joint that does not need to be crossed...
- Most common error...

More examples... UE

- Wrist flexor group - where do we add the resistance?
  - What happens if we “shake hands” with the client when doing this?
  - Brachioradialis - where do we add the resistance?
  - What happens if we grip their hand or otherwise add resistance to their hand?
  - etc., etc.

UE examples... figures

More examples... LE

- Hip flexor group - how do we position them? where do we add the resistance?
  - What happens if we add resistance to the leg instead of the thigh?
  - Knee extensor/flexor group - how do we position them?
  - What happens if we have their entire LE on the table?
  - etc., etc.

LE examples... figures
Perfecting the art of palpation

- Additional guidelines...
- Let's look at some of these.

Guidelines #6, 7, 8, 9

- First find the target muscle in the easiest place possible...
- strum perpendicularly...
- use baby steps...
- have client alternately contract and relax.

More advanced concepts

- #10: Using coupled actions
- #11: Using reciprocal inhibition
The “Big Picture”

• Performing any technique is always more effective when we are first given the “big picture” and then are given the pieces of the puzzle that fill in that picture...

• It comes down to knowing and understanding the muscles and learning some basic palpation guidelines!

Resources for learning muscles... and palpation

www.learnmuscles.com

• Articles...
• Interactive quizzes...
• Tips for therapists, instructors, and students...
• Blog and discussion groups...
• Information about CE workshops, including Home Study Courses...
• Information and links for books, and to see internal pages...

Support for instructors... and students

• Instructor’s manuals with lesson plans, critical thinking questions, and lectures arranged in 50-minute PowerPoint lectures
• Image banks
• Test banks
• My website
• Me
  • my discussion group
  • my blog
• contact me directly with questions by using the contact button at www.learnmuscles.com

Putting it together...
Video for pronator teres

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• youtube: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4etwwmGop-M