



Did you know that Visceral Manipulation has a positive effect on your lymphatic system?

Author: Gail Wetzler, PT, DPT, EDO, BI-D

As you continue your exploration into Visceral Manipulation, you become aware of the environment in which the organs function. The fascial interchange among the organs contributes to the endocrine, immune and neurovascular systems. Each of these systems contribute to the homeostasis and function of our viscera. Additionally, there is a specialized fluid system that distributes water and nutrients while eliminating cellular waste from most tissues and organs within the body.....THE LYMPHATIC SYSTEM.

For the practitioner who is beginning to understand the concept of Visceral Manipulation as "an organ in good health has physiologic motion", fluid exchange at the cellular, vascular, tissue or organ level, is vital for metabolic health. The lymphatic system plays a crucial role in tissue fluid dynamics, immune surveillance, transport of nutrition and elimination of cellular waste. It is a unidirectional transport system designed to absorb macromolecules (proteins), electrolytes, toxins and foreign substances from interstitial fluids and eventually returning these to the blood circulation. The lymphatic system, which consists of 8 liters of lymph fluids and represents 15% of our total body water weight, assists in maintaining the optimal function and integrity of our tissues.

As manual therapists, learning techniques of organ specific fascial manipulation will relieve lymphatic congestion by restoring the supply (inflow) and drainage pathways (outflow) for the circulatory system.

For example, let's look at the liver. This highly vascularized organ will be the first organ we study in this course. The vascular system transports arterial blood from the aorta and venous blood from the GI tract through the larger caliber capillary (sinusoids) of the liver. Some substances exit from these vascular sinusoids to enter the interstitial fluid surrounding the hepatocytes (cells of the liver). Substances from this interstitial fluid enter the local lymphatic capillaries; this fluid is now referred to as lymph. Lymph is propelled through the lymphatic vessels within the liver toward the celiac and portal lymph nodes which house immune cells, for further filtration and detoxification. Thus, the lymphatic system assists the liver in performing its metabolic functions.

Another example is with the intestines. Lymphatic physiology plays a crucial role in homeostasis of the entire gastrointestinal tract. In the intestines, lymph capillaries (or lacteals) and the connecting submucosal lymphatic network help drain the intestinal villi (highly vascular projections of the mucosal surface). Both networks flow into larger collecting lymphatic vessels present in the mesentery. Dietary lipids, fat-soluble vitamins and other substances are absorbed by the lacteals within the intestinal villa where lymph is then propelled toward mesenteric lymph nodes and finally enters the blood circulation.

Barral Visceral Manipulation techniques that encourage viscoelasticity for restoring three-dimensional physiological motion of the liver or intestines will incorporate specific lymphatic movement for enhancing that organ's fluid filtration. We look forward to sharing more lymphatic information and how visceral techniques can assist this important system in each level of our visceral curriculum.

More Information on The Barral Institute: Barralinstitute.com

Meet Gail Wetzler, PT, DPT, EDO, BI-D

Gail Wetzler is the Director of Curriculum for the Barral Institute, as well as a member of the BI Academic Leadership, along with Jean-Pierre Barral and Alain Croibier. She owns an integrative physical therapy practice in Denver, Colorado, where they treat orthopedic, fascial/muscular/soft tissue, neurologic, pain, respiratory, digestive, TBI, as well as women's and men's health issues.

After receiving her initial degree in physical therapy, she pursued her first experience in acute orthopedic care at Hoag Hospital, Newport Beach California. Within 1 year, she became the outpatient clinical supervisor and thus began her journey and desire for continuing education in the science and art of human movement and function. She studied with Travell and Simons, Mennell, Kaltenborn, Maitland, McKenzie, Mitchell, Jones and Greenman in the earlier years of manual therapy education. Inspired by these methods of treatment, she became an assistant teacher to Dr. Janet Travell and later an instructor with the Institute of Physical Art (IPA) developed by Gregg Johnson and Vicky Saliba Johnson.