

VISCERAL MANIPULATION

By Alison Harvey, Chiropractor

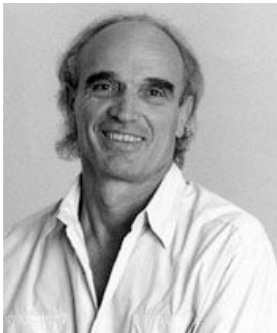
About 6 years ago I came across the idea of Visceral Manipulation. Hearing of a training that might widen my repertoire of skills to include the internal organs, and indeed ultimately the blood vessels, brain and nerves fascinated me. So I headed off and took the class which is now Visceral Manipulation 1, as taught by the Barral Institute.

Usually like many therapists I skirted round the abdomen, working on the musculoskeletal system and ploughing through the problems it presented. But when I was in the Visceral Manipulation class, the concept that the strains internally may be causing many of the structural problems I was working with caught my attention. If this was the case was I working hard for little avail? I decided there was only one thing for it, so I gave it a chance.

Since then I have followed the whole of the visceral manipulation programme and some of the nerve manipulation programme. I now also subscribe to the concept that often soft tissues will lead to structural problems – so now can help those women with hysterectomies who have recurrent low back pain or the asthmatics with recurrent thoracic and cervical dysfunction for example. Or how about widening your practice repertoire to include treatment of digestive dysfunction, menstrual difficulties or breathing problems, where spinal corrections have not fully resolved the problem. And then the concept of being able to directly free a nerve in cases of sciatica or brachial neuralgia is something I find totally exciting! And why do so many of us end up ignoring the engine of our body and the issues it has? Maybe it is time for you too to investigate and widen your skill base to include this vital part of our body in your manual skill repertoire.



How did Visceral Manipulation Develop?



Jean Pierre Barral

Methods such as Visceral Manipulation have been part of the medicinal cultures in Europe and Asia since pre-recorded times. Indeed, manual manipulation of the internal organs has long been a component of some therapeutic systems in Oriental medicine. So it's no surprise that practitioners in many parts of the world have incorporated manipulations designed to work with the internal organs and their functions.

Jean-Pierre Barral, a French osteopath and physiotherapist first became interested in biomechanics while working in the Lung Disease Hospital in Grenoble, France. That's where he met Dr. Arnaud, a recognized specialist in lung diseases and a master of cadaver dissection. Working with Dr. Arnaud, Barral followed patterns of stress in the tissues of cadavers and studied biomechanics in living subjects. This introduced him to the visceral system, its potential to promote lines of tension within the body, and the notion that tissues have memory. All this was fundamental to his development of Visceral Manipulation.

With the help of Dr. Serge Cohen, a Grenoble radiologist, Barral also documented changes in the viscera before and after manipulation. They employed x-ray fluoroscopy and ultrasound to record changes in position and motion, as well as fluid exchange and evacuation. Later they conducted additional research with a team of electrical engineers and technicians using infrared emissions from the body. Additionally Jean- Pierre Barral teamed up with Alain Crobier, another French Osteopath and they expanded the ideas to work on the nervous system.

What is Visceral Manipulation?

At optimal health the relationship between the organs (viscera) and structures of the body (muscles, membranes, fascia and bones) remains stable despite the body's endless varieties of motion. But when an organ can't move in harmony with its surrounding viscera due to abnormal tone, adhesions or displacement, it works against all the body's organs and structures. This disharmony creates fixed, abnormal points of tension that the body is forced to move around. That chronic irritation, in turn, paves the way for disease and dysfunction. VM is designed to encourage innate to improve the functioning of organs, dissipate the negative effects of stress, enhance mobility of the musculoskeletal system through the connective tissue attachments, and influence general metabolism.



How is Visceral Manipulation Performed?

Visceral Manipulation is a gentle hands-on therapy that works through the body's visceral system (the heart, liver, intestines and other internal organs) to locate and alleviate these abnormal points of tension throughout the whole body. VM is based on the specific placement of soft manual forces to encourage the normal mobility, tone and motion of the viscera and their connective tissues. Trained practitioners use the rhythmic motions of the visceral system to evaluate how abnormal forces interplay, overlap and affect the normal body forces at work. These gentle manipulations can potentially improve the functioning of individual organs, the systems the organs function within, and the structural integrity of the entire body.



Due to the delicate and often highly reactive nature of the visceral tissues, gentle force precisely directed reaps the greatest results. As with other methods of manipulation that affect the body deeply, Visceral Manipulation works only to assist the forces already at work. Because of that, trained therapists can be sure of benefiting the body rather than adding further injury or disorganization.

The reason for writing this article is both to introduce the concepts as a possible line for your next CPD, but also to let you know that for the first time the Barral Institute will be running courses in the UK including in Scotland! The Barral Institute Programme structure is modular and is taught in 3 or 4-day blocks – the Visceral Manipulation programme having 6 levels with some additional classes that can be added on depending on specific interests. The first level of the visceral programme is starting on 4th-7th June 2009 in Ayr which will be Visceral Manipulation 1 (Abdominal organs and visceral diagnostic techniques) and then the same class will be repeated in London 19th-22nd November 2009. Visceral Manipulation 2 class is already scheduled for March 2010 in Ayr for those who decide to continue. For further information the Barral Institute UK website is www.barralinstitute.co.uk or call Alison Harvey on 01292 266335.

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