

What is Bowen Therapy and How Does it Work

A Brief Anatomical and Physiological Explanation for the Medical Profession

By Robert M. McCusker

The Australian developed Bowen Therapy or Bowen Technique can be used to treat a range of acute problems such as sport and work related injuries. As an example, Bowen Therapy will provide immediate relief and mobility to a sprained ankle.

If used holistically, Bowen therapy will allow the body to repair itself from a wide range of chronic, long term health conditions and can be used improve the performance and well-being of people.

In both cases these results are obtained by allowing individual muscles to relax or return to their uncontracted length.

This is achieved by using one, or both, of the two Bowen techniques. One Bowen technique is used on tendons and the other Bowen technique is used on muscles.

The aim of the Bowen technique for tendons is to activate the Golgi tendon organ (a type of proprioceptor) which will trigger the tendon to automatically relax. This technique will vary depending on the length and location of the tendon.

The second type of Bowen technique is carried out on the muscle (usually on the belly of the muscle) where the vein and lymphatic vessels connect to the muscle.

The aim of this Bowen technique is to gently push the blood and lymph fluid along their respective vessels, away from the muscle. This process is similar to squeezing toothpaste out of a toothpaste tube.

This is achieved by gently using the fingers to slide the skin over the underlying muscle. An important part of this Bowen Technique is to move the blood and lymph fluid gently enough to avoid stimulating the nervous system.

If this Bowen technique is performed correctly, the first physiological effect is the lymphatic system will flush any excess or trapped neurotransmitters from the synaptic cleft. The immediate effect of this is the muscle stops trying to contract.

The effect of moving blood along the vein, away from the muscle, is that due to pressure differential, blood will exit the muscle to replace the blood moved along the vein.

This in turn allows space for fresh blood to enter the muscle from the artery.

As muscles need energy to relax, the fresh blood entering the muscle will supply energy to the myosin heads allowing them to release, which allows the muscle to relax or return to the muscle's uncontracted length.

The improved blood flow will also supply additional nutrients and oxygen to speed the repair of any injury to the muscle.

To use Bowen Therapy as a holist treatment requires relaxing selected muscles to improve the posture of the patient. This follows the belief that “the structure of the skeleton affects the function of the organs”.

One example is if a person has bad posture and is physically bent and twisted, the internal organs (liver, kidneys, spleen etc) are all being squeezed and squashed out of shape. While this may not be fatal, the organs will not work as effectively as they are meant to.

As the Bowen treatment improves the patient’s posture, the internal organs return to their correct shape and location. The following improvement in organ function is one of the reasons Bowen Therapy achieves the quick results it does on a wide range of health issues.

The last piece of the Bowen puzzle, and possibly the most important, is the effect Bowen Therapy has on the Autonomic Nervous System.

If a gentle Bowen Therapy relaxation treatment is carried out, brain mapping shows the patient’s brain will produce Alpha waves and the patient will feel like they are in a deep meditation.

When this occurs, the Sympathetic Nervous System stops overriding the Para-sympathetic Nervous System and the body goes into automatic repair mode. The Para-sympathetic Nervous System is often referred to as the “resting and digesting” division of the Autonomic Nervous System.

To achieve a similar state, Australian hospitals now put severe trauma patients into a drug induced coma for several days, purely to accelerate the body’s repair work.

Because of the affect Bowen Therapy has on improving posture, improving the blood and lymphatic flow, the improvement in organ function and the way it allows the body to go into automatic repair mode, Bowen Therapy has a legitimate claim to being the most holist form of health care ever invented.

This thesis was researched and written by Robert M. McCusker to improve the effectiveness and understanding of Bowen Therapy as a way to commemorate the 25th Anniversary of the death of Tom Bowen

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