Chiropractic and Fascia

An Open Letter to the Profession

By Geoffrey Bove, DC, PhD

As most of you know, fascia is a component of pretty much all structures. The practice of Rolfing, or structural integration, is a popular form of bodywork and purports to be directed at balancing the fascial structures in the body, leading to optimal structural health. However, like most practices, there is little evidence to support this concept.

Or is there? The First International Fascia Research Congress, held at the Harvard Institutes of Medicine in October 2007, opened my eyes a bit. It turns out that a number of prominent researchers study fascia and the associated biomechanics. Some of these scientists presented their world-class research at this congress (the program can be accessed at www.fasciacongress.org).

There is, of course, a strong role of fascia in structural integrity, and the role of fascia in pain has at least a foundation in science. But in general, the content of the meeting reminded me of the first International Conference on Spinal Manipulation, which was a landmark research meeting for chiropractic held in 1989. It was a beginning. The Rolfers too have a very long way to go to forge a scientific link between what they do and the hypotheses they espouse. The second congress will be held in Amsterdam this coming October. I have had the great honor of being the chairperson of the Scientific Review Committee of both congresses. (The program of the upcoming congress can also be accessed using the above link.)

My participation at the 2009 congress will serve to demonstrate high-velocity maneuvers and talk about how they may influence fascia. I will also be participating on a panel called "Evidence for Manual Therapies." Further, I have been asked to write a review on this topic. Of course, as a chiropractor, and having advanced training in human anatomy and pain physiology, I can talk as long as they will let me about the potential impact of adjustments on fascia. But I am not aware of any published literature that directly discusses this concept, nor am I aware of what other chiropractors think about these concepts.

My goal in writing to you, the practitioners of chiropractic, is to gather opinions and thoughts related to chiropractic and fascia. I would love to hear from anyone and everyone about how you think spinal
manipulation might affect fascia, or might effect changes in clinical conditions through affects on fascia. I will synthesize your ideas and thoughts and use them in my presentations. Please e-mail your suggestions and observations to geoffreybove -at- gmail.com.”

Also please check out my latest research, "Focal Nerve Inflammation Induces Neuronal Signs Consistent With Symptoms of Early Complex Regional Pain Syndromes,” published in Exp Neurol 2009 (online ahead of print). Here, I have finally started experimentation aimed at investigating a novel mechanism for somatovisceral interactions in line with the founding tenets of chiropractic. It is a long haul, my colleagues, but I keep working for our common good.

Dr. Geoffrey Bove is a graduate of Hampshire College, Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College, and the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. His research interests are focused on pain due to neural inflammation, including effects on autonomic axons. Currently, Dr. Bove is an associate professor at the University of New England College of Osteopathic Medicine.