

## Treating Sciatica with Bowen Technique - Part A

Sciatica can be a very painful and persistent condition. In many cases the client who has Sciatica may have been to other physical therapists to have this condition corrected.

**A Bowen practitioner skilled in advanced procedures offers the Sciatica sufferer a release from this condition.**

### What is Sciatica?

Sciatica is a type of neuritis characterised by severe pain along the path of the sciatic nerve or its branches. Inflammation or injury to the sciatic nerve (common peroneal portion) and its branches results in deep pain that may extend from the buttock down the posterior aspect of the leg and lateral pain in the lower leg.

Other symptoms may include foot drop, an inability to dorsiflex the foot and loss of sensation over the lower leg and foot. Sciatica usually affects only one side of the leg and can alternate from one leg to the other.

### Sciatic Nerve Distribution

The origin is from L4-S3. This sciatic nerve is actually two nerves - tibial and common peroneal - bound together by a common sheath of connective tissue. It splits into its two divisions, usually at the knee. As sciatic nerve descends through the thigh, it sends branches to hamstring muscles and adductor magnus.

### Aetiology

Causes of Sciatic Nerve Injury include:

- Lumbar disc herniation (slipped). This is probably the most common cause.

An intervertebral disc has an outer wrapping of tough fibrocartilage (annulus fibrosus) which envelopes a soft centre (nucleus pulposus). Pain occurs when the soft centre core extrudes through the fibrous wrapping and the bulge puts pressure

on the nerve root. It is most common in the lower Lumbar region L4-L5-S1.

- Degenerative disc disease. The normal process of disc degeneration (thinning and drying out) can cause pain along the sciatic nerve as the inflammatory proteins from the disc can become exposed and irritate the area.
- Osteoarthritis Degeneration of the lumbosacral spine or bony spur growth in the lower lumbar spine (L4-L5) can cause pressure on the nerves as they exit the intervertebral foramen.
- Piriformis syndrome. This occurs when the sciatic nerve becomes irritated because of excessive piriformis muscle tension. The sciatic nerve can be as thick as a finger in this area. In some people the sciatic nerve passes through the piriformis muscle.
- Pregnancy - pressure from the uterus.
- Improperly administered intramuscular injection.

### Assessment & Testing

The individual will have deep pain in the butt or gluteal region, they may stand with the affected leg in slight rotation or experience some difficulty to outwardly rotate and adduct the hip. Pain and tenderness will be in the mid-buttock region when palpated. The client may experience a loss of sensation in the lower lateral leg. A simple test will give a better indication if there is damage to a disc.

### The leg - raiser test

This test is performed with your client supine, hip medially rotated and knee extended, raise the leg carefully until the client notices pain. Lower the leg slightly until the pain is relieved. Ask the client to flex their neck onto their chest while dorsi-flexing the foot. This is called the Hydman's sign; increased pain

may indicate lumbar disc dysfunction in the dura mater of the spinal cord. Pain that does not increase with neck flexion or dorsiflexion indicates tight hamstrings.

### The Bowen Technique (Bowenwork™)

The technique was developed by Tom Bowen (1916-1982) in Geelong Victoria. The technique is a very gentle form of natural healing and is model of simplicity - it produces maximum results with a minimum of intervention.

We respect the body as capable of healing itself; the single intention of the work is to encourage the body to respond by stimulating its own innate healing ability. Following treatment the body continues to respond over the next 3 to 5 days.

Mr Bowen was extremely busy in his Geelong clinic, performing about 13,000 treatments per year. This was verified in 1975 by the Victorian government inquiry into alternative health care professionals.

Considering the treatments were 7 days apart and most people needed only one to three treatments, an amazing number of clients passed through the clinic and benefited from the Bowenwork. Mr Bowen held free of cost clinics for children, people with disabilities and community service workers.

In 1974, Mr Bowen invited Mr Oswald Rentsch to study the work. This continued for two and a half years, ultimately authorising Ossie to document the technique.

Mr Bowen had no notes, charts or manuals; these were produced over time to ensure the technique would not be lost.

Honouring Mr Bowen's request to teach the work after his death, Ossie and his wife Elaine held their first Australian seminar in 1986.

The technique is now taught in 24 countries with accredited practitioners in 32 countries.

### Holistic Healing and Relaxing

The Bowen technique embodies a truly holistic approach to healthcare. When used correctly the technique is revolutionising the field of health. It treats specific conditions addressing the entire body, via the autonomic nervous system (ANS). The ANS controls over 80% of bodily functions and is very susceptible to external stressors.

A Bowen treatment is very relaxing. It is usually performed with the client on a treatment table, sofa or bed or in a chair, depending on the age and mobility of the client. It is appropriate to use Bowen on individuals of all ages and in all conditions of health. Many of the "procedures" can be made through light clothing.

### Acute Injuries

Bowen can be effective when used on acute injuries. The practitioner

may address only the traumatised parts of the body because there has not been time for the injured body to begin compensating for and accommodating the injury.

### Background

This study was undertaken to assess whether The Bowen Technique as taught by The Bowen Therapy Academy of Australia would provide relief for sciatic pain.

A quantitative study was designed to provide some results that could be assessed.

John Stephens  
Qld.

*The Methodology, Results, Summary of Findings and Conclusions will be printed in the next issue.*

## 2006 International Bowenwork Conference

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New Haven, Connecticut, USA  
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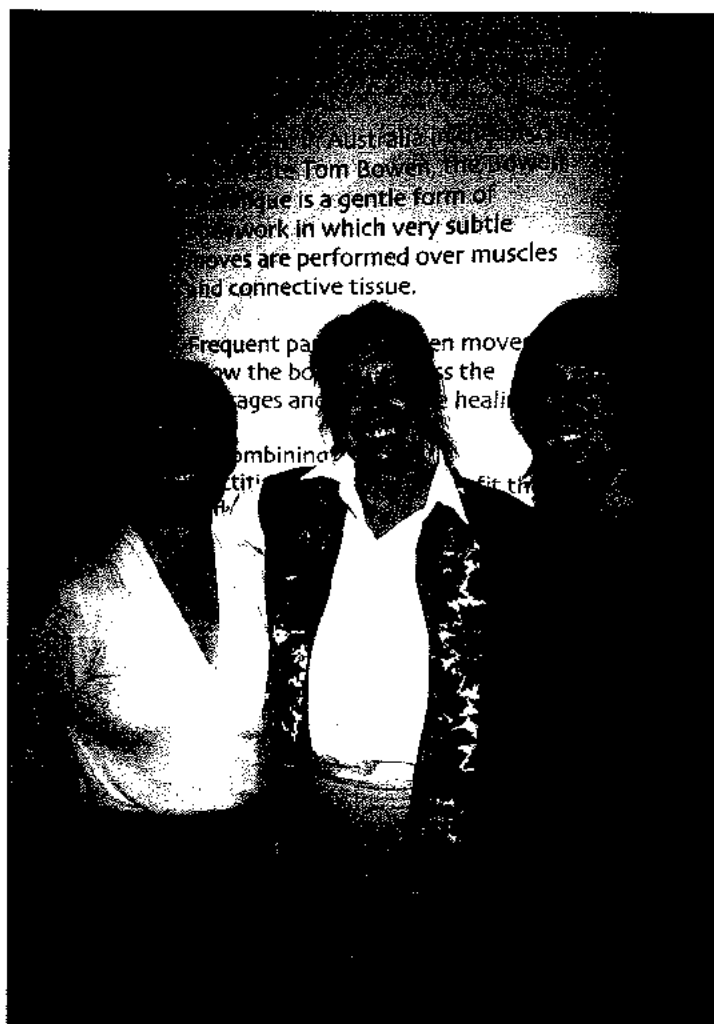
Anne Winter is conducting a Spiritual Tour to Peru, high in the Andes and has connected this trip with a link to enable Bowen People to travel onwards to the Conference. Let's travel together!

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Phone 0419 306 429

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New Zealand instructor Annie Montgomery with her son Scott at the class in Rotorua, New Zealand



L to R: Tina Spurling, CCMRT Instructor; Alison Goward, EMRT Director/Instructor and Carolyn Prior, Administration Manager Equus College of Learning & Research

# Treating Sciatica with Bowen Therapy - Part B

*Part A of John Stephens' article was presented in the December issue of Bowen Hands. In that issue John covered: what is Sciatica, nerve distribution, aetiology, assesment, history and background.  
Well done John!*

## Methodology

The author is self employed, fully trained in The Bowen Technique and practises in his own clinic on the Sunshine Coast. Other modalities are not used when using Bowen. Over a period of six months each new client who presented with potential sciatic symptoms were given two documents.

- a) A "confidential client record" where the client completes the document showing the area of pain on a diagram along with other presenting symptoms. This document is given to all new clients on their first visit.
- b) Those clients who described pain that could potentially be sciatic pain (in above document) and assessment were given a further questionnaire to complete during the course of their treatment. This document was to be completed and returned to the clinic within three weeks of the pain subsiding.

The study consisted of forty nine clients with forty six questionnaires returned. The other three were "telephone surveyed" to establish how they were after their Bowen treatments.

## Results

1. All clients who returned their questionnaire were impressed with their treatments and results.
2. Thirty nine clients (80%) had no pain after 3-4 weeks, whilst a further eight were pain-free after 5-6 weeks. All of these clients were happy with their treatment regime and the results.
3. Thirty six clients (73%) had heard of Bowen whilst only thirty

(61%) had used it previously. Of those who had used it previously, only twenty six (88%) clients were happy with the results. This could be due to different levels of skill of the therapist or a therapist offering something else but calling it Bowen.

4. For the sample, forty seven (96%) clients rated Bowen as an effective treatment method to remove their pain, with only two clients saying they still had some pain although reduced.
5. There were eleven (23%) clients who felt that this Bowen was different to what they had experienced previously.
6. Forty four (90%) clients came from referrals and yellow pages. On the Sunshine Coast we have a BAA heading in yellow pages.
7. Twenty seven (55%) clients were not aware of the list of conditions that Bowen may assist.
8. Forty four (90%) clients stated they would consider Bowen for other health matters.

## Summary of Findings

Clients in survey (n = 49)

	% Yes	% No
Q1. Awareness of The Bowen technique		
Heard of	73	27
Used previously	61	39

Q2. Results of Bowen previously (n = 30)

Effective treatment	88	22
How many treatments previously		
2 - 5	65	
> 5	25	
Some did not answer this question.		

Q3. For this condition, how would you rate the treatment given to relieve pain (n = 49)

Successful	96	4
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Q4. Was the Bowenwork different

this time 23 68  
(there were 5 clients who did not answer)

Q5. How did you find the Bowen therapist (n = 49)

yellow pages	22
referral	68
advertisement	8
webpage	2

Q6. Were you aware of the range of conditions that Bowenwork may help with (n = 49) 45 55

Q7. Would you choose Bowen to help with other health matters (n = 49) 90 2  
(this would depend on the health concern)

Q8. Any other comments (a selection)

- Bowen is very relaxing!
- Can't believe how Bowen reduces pain so quickly!
- I have reduced pain in my leg and butt after one treatment.
- My body feels lighter and more flexible!
- I had five treatments, no more pain. I will be back.
- I came because of leg pain, but my shoulders now move better.
- Last time I had Bowen it hurt, this was different!
- I have had about 20 Bowen treatments over the last 12 months and have not had to see my GP. Bowen is remarkable!

## Conclusions

Most of the clients who presented with sciatic symptoms were relieved of pain in a short period of time after starting Bowenwork™. Many of the clients were surprised to find that they were feeling much better and generally more at ease following their treatments. Some of these clients had tried other remedial treatments without success.

Many of the participants had chronic pain that they had come to accept as being "sort of normal"

because they had tried for relieve from various sources, but only minimal relief. It seems that many people expect to have pain, particularly in shoulders and neck region because they are getting older. One client said, "Oh well at my age, some pain in the neck and shoulders is normal, isn't it".

On a disturbing note, there was a Bowen Therapist (unknown) who did not treat the client but advised natural medications, together with topical creams.

It can be said very clearly from this research that Bowenwork™ applied properly will help sciatic pain to ease and allow the client to be pain-free within a short period of time after commencing treatment.

John Stephens  
Qld.

#### References

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## USING BOWEN TECHNIQUE IN A HEALTH SERVICE WORKPLACE TO IMPROVE THE PHYSICAL AND MENTAL WELL BEING OF STAFF

is the title of a research paper accepted as a peer reviewed paper for publication in the Australian Journal of Holistic Nursing.

With acknowledgement to the Northern Rivers Area Health Service (N.S.W.) author and Bowtech practitioner Anna Dicker from Lennox Head N.S.W. conducted a six week program using Bowen Technique where she treated 31 staff from a Hospital and Community Health Service in a group setting. It provided an innovative way to reduce stress and improve physical health. Quantitative and qualitative data indicated that Bowen Technique was successful in reducing pain, improving mobility, reducing stress, improving energy, well being and sleep.

This 18 page invaluable research paper may be viewed on website [www.bowen.com](http://www.bowen.com). Professionally presented this paper contains references and graphs and is a must for Bowen practitioners.

Copies will be available from Bowtech Head Office. A postage and handling fee of \$5.00 is required in Australia and \$10 for international.

Anna Dicker is a Registered Nurse and Midwife who is the Child Family and Adult co-ordinator at Ballina Community Health. She was previously employed as a community nurse at Byron Bay Community Health. Anna completed her Bowen training in 1999 and has been actively involved in research of the Technique ever since. She is the Chairperson of the Australian Bowen Association Research Committee.



*The Rotorua New Zealand Advanced class, September 2005*