Book Review

Stability, sport and performance movement: great technique without injury (2008) **J. Elphinston**. Lotus Publishing. ISBN 0-9053-6709-2

Musculoskeletal profiling or screening is routinely promoted as an important strategy for injury prevention and performance enhancement. Although there is little consensus on what format a screening procedure should take, clinicians have increasingly employed more functional or sports-orientated tasks, rather than the traditional isolated testing of muscle strength and range of movement. This trend towards more holistic testing is reflected in the types of (pre) rehabilitation packages that are now commonly prescribed to athletes. Indeed, for many, there is a dogmatic belief that exercises incorporating 'core stability', 'motor control' or 'functional stability' are the panacea for all movement dysfunction. Despite their popularity however, many of these rehabilitation terms are used interchangeably, and few clinicians may fully understand the concept underpinning their use.

In light of this, Elphinston has produced a timely book that dispels many of the common myths and beliefs surrounding this area of sports medicine. She replaces them with comprehensive, yet commonsensical models of movement, technique and sporting performance. The author, who previously published 'The Core Workout', has again used her extensive clinical experience to create another excellent text. The first chapter is used to define important concepts such as functional stability, balance, posture and motor control, highlighting how they interact to influence movement efficiency and injury risk. This links neatly into the following chapter on basic muscle structure, classification and function.

From Chapter 3 onwards, the focus of the book shifts away from theoretic models, to fulfil its main objective of being a practical resource. Chapter 4 guides us through the process of functional assessment using both text and photographic images to describe key testing procedures. The tests progress logically and the author consistently rationalises them based on the theories introduced at the start of the book. This section alone would be a valuable resource to most clinicians and athletes, based on the photographic examples highlighting exactly where dysfunction is occurring during testing and the potential effect this might have on sporting performance. The more experienced clinician will probably be familiar with many of the tests; however they should be interested in the author's scoring scales which are used to objectively grade each performance.

The following 4 chapters outline how to solve movement dysfunction and improve functional stability using a balanced programme of exercises. They progress from foundation and awareness exercises, to advanced global co-ordination and neuro-muscular control. The array of exercises is vast, and again, the detailed text and multitude of photographs remains consistent. Retraining movement can be challenging for patient and therapist alike, however the author's clever analogies and explanations accompanying each of the exercises will undoubtedly facilitate this process. Perhaps the greatest strength of these chapters, and indeed the entire book, is the method by which structure, function, examination and rehabilitation are integrated together using plain and concise language.

The later chapters reiterate much of the previous information; however, they include some interesting insights into stability training in children, and highlight some sports-specific considerations. The final chapter includes a series of case studies and clinical vignettes which detail potential athletic problems or injuries, and outline the most appropriate rehabilitation pathways. These are certainly not tailored towards the evidence-based medicine junky; however they successfully integrate all of the principles provided earlier in the book, and place them in a clinical context for the reader.

The author writes in the preface that 'simple things done well win the day'. This phrase provides an excellent summation of this book. Despite the potential complexity of the subject, this is an enjoyable read, which has numerous clinical applications. I would highly recommend it to individuals of every level of experience, working across the sporting spectrum.

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