

Trish Wisbey-Roth

Physiotherapy in three dimensions

Intro: Trish Wisbey-Roth's goal as a physiotherapist and educator is to improve both therapist and patient knowledge of the Functional biomechanics of the spine, and how to optimise muscle function and control. Here she talks about her upcoming courses, why it's important to consider treatment in three dimensions and designing treatment plans that help patients stay active.

What do you mean by treatment in three dimensions?

We move in a three-dimensional way—you flex as you rotate or you extend as you rotate. The body is a biomechanical machine that's driven by muscles that are connected by fascia and there are many predictable patterns of how we move functionally. By assessing people functionally and looking at their limitations, it allows you to identify the issues in their functional movement and strengths rather than something arbitrary that may not be related to their function. The assessment techniques I teach all come back to looking at the individual person's function and their movements, and the treatment strategies are all designed in a three-dimensional way so it directly influences the movement patterns that the client wants to get back to.

People don't have to be perfect to be pain free. They just have to be able to function effectively and confidently in the movement patterns they need in their life, with the balance, strength, coordination, and really, the mind and body connection to carry that out. That's the great thing about this approach—you can fill in the gaps for each patient without them having to be a perfect human being.

You present practical treatment and rehab strategies for the spine and lumbar regions, with an emphasis on return to functional movement. What has led you to focus on this?

We now have a generation that expects to be active into our middle and later years. In my mother's generation, by the time their kids were grown up and they were in their 50s they knitted; had cups of tea; walked a little; gardened and that was it. They didn't do a lot of physical exercise.

These days a lot of us, both men and women, who are now in our 40s or early 50s still want to be able to walk long distances, swim, run, and play sports. Unfortunately, if a doctor sends you for a scan and you've got some age-appropriate changes to your joints and bones, they say 'Oh you know you're getting old. You've got OA. There's nothing you can do about it.' But there is so much you can do if you just work towards gaining what you need for the functions that you want to get back to. It's using the functional athlete approach to all age groups dependent on their goals.

During my whole career I have found it interesting to work with patients who weren't getting better with regular physio, giving them a very comprehensive Bio-psychosocial approach to physio. When you work on combining the mind, body, strength, flexibility, and endurance, people respond to that because you look at what pieces are missing and build an individual program for them. I think that approach really works whether you've been injured for some time or you are an elite athlete, whether you're young or you're middle aged.

There's lots of great courses around on the sporting hamstring, the sporting groin, the sporting hip, the athletic hip. But in actual fact the number of, just as one example, older hips we are seeing in the clinic in the last ten years has grown exponentially and there's very few courses on how to assess and treat them.

My attitude is that people need to learn to optimise their physical ability and confidence in movement throughout all life stages. It almost becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy that people get older and don't do as much. But they might just need a physio to synthesise down the key things they need to know to continue in their loved activities—some important exercises, how to pace the amount of load that they do on a week to week basis, or knowing what happens if their pain does spike, the strategy to use to settle things back down.

What can participants expect from attending one of your courses?

What physios need more than ever are really practical and time-efficient frameworks to assess, differently diagnose and treat the most common things we see in private practice and hospital outpatient clinics, which is low back pain, neck problems and hip issues. Participants can expect very practical courses providing a really good, efficient scaffold to assess and then treat clients with these problems.

We start out with theory, just until morning tea, and then the rest of the day is set up to learn clear critical assessment strategies and then really effective treatment pathways and in some courses active exercise rehabilitation strategies for those conditions.

In Adelaide, I'm presenting my course 'Optimising motor control of the lumbo pelvic and the older hip', which provides a comprehensive muscular assessment and exercise rehabilitation program for the lumbo-pelvic region and a wide variety of age-related hip conditions that present for assessment. It's a very practical two-day course where participants are exposed to a wide variety of functional exercises and theory/research behind assessing and progressing a lumbo/pelvic functional program and rehabilitation strategies for the older hip patients.

In Melbourne my upcoming course '3D assessment and treatment of cervical and thoracic spine and ribs' is aimed at clinicians interested in cervical and thoracic spin issues. Again it's a two day intensively practical course that teaches a simplified assessment and treatment approach to a very biomechanically complex area of the ribs, thoracic spine and cervical spine.

Later in 2022 I will also be present courses on diagnosing and treating hip problems as well as a program for optimising rehab programs for cyclists.

Who are the courses aimed at and who will be attending?

I'm always really excited to see physiotherapists who have been in the profession for a long time still coming to my courses, which is great. But I think physiotherapists who are within their first five years of practice will get a lot out of my courses. I find that they're often grappling with creating an effective treatment and exercise scaffold and quickly being able to differentially diagnose where to go with patients and a course like this is

really worthwhile for them. I make sure it gives them useful tools for their toolbox and it really builds their confidence. It's a way of thinking, and as one physiotherapist said to me when you start thinking; assessing and treating three-dimensionally and functionally you can't go back. It's a real game changer because it links to the person in an individual way.

If the low back, pelvis, hip, cervical or thoracic spine are of interest to you or you see quite a lot of these issues and you feel that you have a few gaps in your knowledge, these courses give you a framework for assessment, diagnosis and treatment. And it's not a recipe—it's very individualised but it gives you real confidence that you're ticking the boxes for that individual patient for them to maximise their outcomes.