Background

- What are the most common reasons people seek veterinary help?
  - Performance issues (sub-clinical lameness)
  - Stiffness... lead issues... travels crooked... cold backed... cross canters.... can't travel well down hill... bucks over jumps... kicks out... difficult to groom... difficult to cinch or girth... runs out on turns
Progression of “Performance Disease”

- Performance issues progress to unsoundness
  - Suspensory and Tendon Injuries
  - Back pain
  - Hock and stifle problems
  - Navicular
  - Ringbone
  - Other degenerative joint diseases
You Can Tell a Pioneer by the Arrows in His/Her Back

- How in the world did I get into this?
  - Conventional training limitations
- Holistic Approach – Seek the “Root”
  - Don’t just treat the “branch”
  - Prevention versus treatment
The Spectrum of Health

Perfect health

Wellness

*Asymptomatic dysfunction*

Symptoms

Overt disease

Death

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The Nature of Balance

- Circular – Not linear
- Balance factors
  - Level of training of the horse... feet... saddle fit... rider’s hands... dental issues... bits... muscle balance... emotional state of the rider... emotional state of the horse... spinal motion
Seeking the Root

- Saddle fitting issues
- Shoeing issues
- Issues with bits and headgear
- Spinal movement restriction
- Muscle imbalance issues

- Dental issues
- Rider induced tension
  - Hands, balance
- Rider postural imbalance
- Overuse/Under-conditioned
  - The 30 day wonder
Seeking the Root – Suspensory Injury
How did he get this lameness, Doc?

- The nature of trauma
  - Repetitive micro-trauma vs. major trauma
- The trip from postural compensation to lameness
Behavioral Issues - Training Problems

- 90% due to pain or discomfort
- Nature of pain
  - Pain causes anxiety \(\leftrightarrow\) Anxiety leads to muscle tension...
  - Chronic muscle tension leads to performance deficit \(\rightarrow\)
  - Chronic muscle tension leads to lameness
- The lesson here for us all
  - Forgive the action – Listen to the message!
The veterinarian is the horse’s first line of defense in illness and injury

- Need a diagnosis

Alternative medicine treatment without appropriate diagnosis

- May delay valuable complementary therapies

The need is to integrate the “Eastern and the Western!!!”
Modalities - What’s Out There

- Acupuncture
- Chiropractic
- Dentistry
- Saddle Fitting
- Shoeing (appropriate balance)
- Stretching
- Massage / deep muscle work
- Physical Therapy
  - Microcurrent
  - Ultrasound
  - Lasers / Infrared
- Nutrition, neutraceuticals, herbs
Chiropractic for Prevention & Treatment of Injury

- A system that can address the nervous system
- How can you adjust a horse?
  - Can you put a bone back in place?
  - What about pinched nerves?
- What then do chiropractors do?
Motion of the Equine Spine

“The fact is that the spine of the horse exhibits little movement apart from that of the neck and tail.”

Spinal Movement

- OK now I know that a horse’s back doesn’t move ---
- So, now, Wiseguy, how do you adjust something that doesn’t move???
“A joint that loses its ability to move properly, also loses its ability to nourish itself “ ....”and maintain tissue integrity and therefore, begins to degenerate”

Gottlieb, M.S., Journal of Manipulative and Physiotherapeutics, 1997 (20 (6) 400 -414
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Range of Motion

Passive Range
Active Range
Neutral

Elastic Barrier
Anatomic Barrier
Paraphysiologic Space

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Safety

- Short lever, high velocity movement performed in a precise direction and over a limited distance
- Long lever manipulation
- Lay manipulator vs. trained professional
Acupuncture

- Acupuncture as a healing system
  - Works through the nervous system
- Acupuncture and the body as an electrical system
- Effects of placing an acupuncture needle into the body
The Body as a Pharmacy

- The mind body connection – Soma/Psyche
- Neurotransmitters
  - Pain control
  - Internal medicine
Acupuncture in Musculo-Skeletal Conditions

- Does it cure arthritis?
- Effects on muscle tension and the effects of muscle tension
- Pain relief
SHORTENED MUSCLE ACROSS A JOINT...
CAN CAUSE ARTHRALGIA & OR OSTEO-ARTHRITIS

"THE GUNN APPROACH TO THE TREATMENT OF CHRONIC PAIN" C.CHAN GUNN
"THE GUNN APPROACH TO THE TREATMENT OF CHRONIC PAIN" C.CHAN GUNN

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Normal Muscle

Shortened Muscle =
Super-Sensitive
Trigger Points
Enthesopathic Tendons

THE GUNN APPROACH TO THE TREATMENT OF CHRONIC PAIN” C.CHAN GUNN

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What about Saddles?
Saddles Are Not a Horses Best Friend
Performance Problems

- Slow Warm-up or Cold Backed
- Bucks
- Short Stride (Especially in Warm-up)
- Lead Change Difficulty (Cross Canter)
- Poor Engagement
- Poor Impulsion
- Poor Lengthenings
Performance Problems

- Loss of power (forehand, behind)
- Stiff / resistant to one side
- Refuses on jumps
- Jumps flat or off forehand
- Bucks over jumps or on landing
- Wide on turns
- Difficulty with spins, slides, rollbacks or pirouette
“Behavioral” Problems

“Behavioral (Training Problems)”

- Difficult to Groom ... Won’t Stand Still
- Cinchy ... Bites ... Cow Kicks When Saddled
- Flinches ... Kicks ... Bites ... Moves Away When Groomed or Palpated
- Avoidance Responses (e.g. Bolts, or Bucks ... or Rears ... Won’t Stand Still When Saddling)
- Bucks ... Kicks ... Bites When Do Reflex Tests
“Behavioral Problems” (Con’t)

- Tail Switching, Head Tossing
- Dips Back When Mount
- Cold Backed When Mounted
- Resistance to the Aids
Direct Trauma & Secondary Effects of Trauma

- The obvious galls, scar tissue and swelling
- The secondary effects
  - The path to lameness
Saddles as a Source of Performance Deficit & Lameness

- Trying to place a static object on a dynamic surface
- Quality Control
  - Twisted trees
  - Asymmetry in panels... stirrup hangers... girth or cinch attachments
  - Balance point
The Ridgway System of Examination for Saddle Fitting

1. Examine Horse’s Back and Related Factors
2. Evaluate Saddle Off of the Horse
3. Evaluate the Saddle on the Horse
4. Evaluate The Saddle With Rider Mounted and Stationary
5. Evaluate The Saddle With Rider & Horse Moving
Postural Deviations

- Assess potential need for “body-work” before attempt saddle fit
Considerations

- Age of the horse
- Appropriate to the horse
  - Appropriate contact
    - Pitch / rafter
    - Arc / rocker
    - Length for the horse
  - Freedom for the horses movement
Considerations

➢ Appropriate for the rider
  • Seat size
  • Balance point
  • Stirrup placement and length
  • Placement of stirrup hangers
  • Placement of blocks
What should I Buy?
What Should I Spend?

- **Cost & Fit**
  - No direct connection
  - Custom versus “Off the rack”
In Summary

- Prevention beats treatment of lameness and injury!
- Don’t wait until “court of last resort” before look at some of the complementary therapies!
  - They may save your horse’s career

Become an aware and educated consumer!