



Let's get ... flexible

BY MELISSA HEYBOER

THERE'S MUCH MORE TO REHABILITATION THAN JUST IMPROVING WHAT WAS ONCE A PAINFUL INJURY. While recovering from muscle and joint pain is important, so is the need for improving a patient's flexibility and range-of-motion (ROM).

Whether your patient is looking for relief from sprains, strains, disc injuries, or joint dysfunction, or if a patient simply wants to improve their overall well-being, bettering ones flexibility and ROM has unending benefits.

According to Gregory H. Doerr, DC, CCSP, ART, CKTP, developing better flexibility and greater ROM ultimately helps improve dysfunctions of the body — but it can also help prevent them.

"Inflexibility and loss of ROM leads to immobility of tissue, which leads to a number of joint and soft tissue dysfunctions," said Doerr, "including fibrosis, tissue hypoxia, and the production of inflammatory markers including substance P and CGRP."

Ultimately, he says, this can lead to pain and fear avoidance.

Steven Weiniger, DC, says the most important thing is that improving flex-

ibility and ROM promotes symmetry of motion and, ultimately, helps the patient. ROM should be the first phase of rehab as you can't advance to balance, strength, and function until ROM is improved.

"Your body is made to move," Weiniger said. "If your body is moving asymmetrically, your muscles will get strong in the way you're training them to move."

This creates added stress on the joints and they break down, he said.

"The chiropractor comes into the game when the person says my back or my neck keeps going out. That's where the kinetic chain is buckling due to the asymmetric force from the muscles that have been trained to move asymmetrically."

This is where low-cost flexibility and ROM tools can come in handy.

"A person's perception of how they are moving is often not accurate, which creates problems when performing exercises or treatment programs," Weiniger said. "Even though the exercise is, in theory, designed to be a good exercise, it's moving the body without symmetry. [Flexibility and ROM] tools facilitate the

creation of that symmetry of motion."

Fortunately, as a chiropractor, incorporating flexibility and ROM exercises and tools for the upper and lower extremities is not only easy, but can enhance your bottom line and broaden your patient base.

"I think providing these tools in your office can be used to differentiate yourself from other practitioners," said Jeffrey Tucker, DC. "This type of system can help teach clients how to improve posture; and it helps neck and back pain patients."

Tucker also suggests incorporating flexibility and ROM into a group class for your patients. He says exercise training has proven to bring in additional revenue.

"Clients want one-on-one motivation," he said. "I sell a higher quality lifestyle; it's not about fitness. Emphasis is placed on practical, functional everyday skills. It builds trust, it gives you an opportunity to have better communication with clients, and it creates value."

Weiniger adds that with the right tools, patients can also reach their goals and improve the flexibility and ROM of both their upper and lower extremities

from the comfort of their homes.

“Tools are nice because it provides structure and a point of responsibility,” Weiniger said. “They bought it, and they have it, and it lets them have an objective metric.”

Patients need to understand that at-home flexibility and ROM exercises have the same benefit as rehab elsewhere.

“We already know that our in-office methods of manipulation, mobilization, and modalities improve pain and function,” said Tucker. “If you do not teach clients to perform corrective exercises at home, you will miss the opportunity to allow patients to ‘turn on’ the nerves and muscles prior to workouts; enhance the excitability of the neuromuscular sequence; improve the recruitment of the muscle bundles

and fibers; enhance muscle sequencing and movement patterns; improve coordination; and increase ROM.”

Weiniger says that adding flexibility and ROM exercises to your practice is not only beneficial for improving motion, but it helps build the doctor-patient relationship.

“Bottom line is that we are entering a time where people are going to be more responsible for their health,” said Weiniger. “By selling the patient an inexpensive tool to help strengthen their body, the person is going to value the doctor better.

“There are some residual benefits to selling it, but the goal is to build the doctor-patient relationship so the patient can see you as a coach and teacher as well as a doctor who values the patients own best interest.”

With so many inexpensive options out there, Doerr says it’s easy for chiropractors to embrace active rehab — like the tools needed for flexibility and ROM exercises — in their practices.

“As chiropractors, we have mastered the art of passive care,” Doerr said. “It is time we evolve to match the evidence currently available and move our practices into the evidence-influenced age.

“We often fail to realize that the key to new patients and more referrals is not associated with marketing teams, coaches, or gimmicks, but with positive outcomes in a faster time period. Active protocols assist us in achieving this.”



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New flexibility and ROM products from Thera-Band®

The chiropractor’s success in improving a patient’s range of motion sets the stage and pace for the patient’s resulting advancements in balance, strength, and function. Success is much more likely in this critical first phase of rehab when patients can take an active role in their recovery and see quantifiable improvements. This is where two new Thera-Band® flexibility and ROM products can make a difference.

The Thera-Band Shoulder Pulley is an essential, low-cost tool for patients undergoing shoulder rehabilitation in regaining and maintaining range of motion. Unlike conventional pulleys, the Thera-Band Shoulder Pulley features a unique rope that is divided into sections by distinct black marks. This innovative design eliminates guesswork for patients. By referencing the position of these marks during exercise, patients get immediate feedback on progress, which validates their improvement and drives their motivation. The marked rope also allows the rehab professional to set precise goals and limitations so

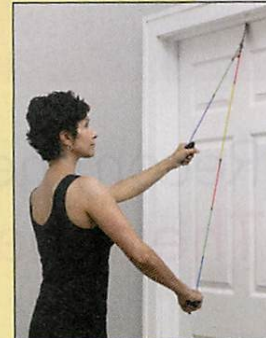
that patients know how far to go and where to stop.

The Thera-Band Stretch Strap is a revolutionarily replacement to static stretching devices. Unlike a static-only strap, the Thera-Band Stretch Strap can be used with both dynamic and static stretches. The Stretch Strap’s innovative elastic design provides a more effective, dynamic contract-relax stretch and a more comfortable static stretch. This dual purpose enables a complete replacement of static stretching devices.

Like the Thera-Band Shoulder Pulley, the stretch strap provides visual feedback for the patient; feedback that validates their progress and heightens their motivation. The strap’s multi-loop design allows for gradual stretching of major muscle groups, extremities, and foot specific related conditions. These numbered loops also allow the rehab practitioner to provide clear, accurate instruction when setting goals and limitations for the patient, a real benefit for patient safety.

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