

# The Therapeutic Value of Visceral Manipulation



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work. The goal is to help the body's normal forces remove abnormal effects, whatever their sources. Those effects can be global, encompassing many areas of bodily function.

**How Did Visceral Manipulation Begin?**

Methods such as VM have been part of the medicinal cultures in Europe and Asia since prerecorded times. Indeed, manual manipulation of the internal organs has long been a component of some therapeutic systems in Oriental medicine. So it's no surprise that practitioners in many parts of the world have incorporated manipulations designed to work with the internal organs and their functions.

I first became interested in biomechanics while working as a registered physical therapist of the Lung Disease Hospital

I was surprised to find appreciable movement. The patient confirmed that he felt relief from his back pain after going to an "old man who pushed something in his abdomen."

This incident piqued my interest in the relationship between the viscera and the spine. That's when I began exploring stomach manipulations with several patients, with successful results gradually leading me to develop VM.

**How is Visceral Manipulation Performed?**

VM is based on the specific placement of soft manual forces to encourage the normal mobility, tone and motion of the viscera and their connective tissues. These gentle manipulations can potentially improve the functioning of individual organs, the systems the organs function within, and the structural integrity of the entire body.

Harmony and health exist when motion is free and excursion is full - when motion is not labored, overexcited, depressed, or conflicting with neighboring structures and their mobility. Therapists using VM assess the dynamic functional actions as well as the somatic structures that perform individual activities. They also evaluate the quality of the somatic structures and their functions in relation to an overall harmonious pattern, with motion serving as the gauge for determining quality.

Due to the delicate and often highly reactive nature of the visceral tissues, gentle force precisely directed reaps the greatest results. As with other methods of manipulation that affect the body deeply, VM works only to assist the forces already at work. Because of that, trained therapists can be sure of benefiting the body rather than adding further injury or disorganization.

To locate a Visceral Manipulation Practitioner in your area please go to [www.barralinstitute.com](http://www.barralinstitute.com) and click on "Find a Therapist."



With the help of Dr. Serge Cohen, a Grenoble radiologist, I also documented changes in the viscera before and after manipulation. We employed x-ray fluoroscopy and ultrasound to record changes in position and motion, as well as fluid exchange and evacuation. Later we conducted additional research with a team of electrical engineers and technicians using infrared emissions from the body.



in Grenoble, France. That's where I met Dr. Arnaud, a recognized specialist in lung diseases and a master of cadaver dissection. Working with Dr. Arnaud, I followed patterns of stress in the tissues of cadavers and studied biomechanics in living subjects. This introduced me to the visceral system, its potential to promote lines of tension within the body, and the notion that tissues have memory. All this was fundamental to my development of VM. In 1974, I earned my diploma in osteopathic medicine from the European School of Osteopathy in Maidstone, England. Working primarily with articular and structural manipulation, I began forming the basis for Visceral Manipulation during an unusual session with a patient I'd been treating with spinal manipulations.

During the preliminary examination,

Life and motion are intertwined. Although we can have motion without life, we cannot have life without motion. Of particular importance are those motions - not ordinarily visible - that take place within the human body. They're linked to many levels of activity, from cellular pulsations to rhythmic contractions of the heart, diaphragm, even the craniosacral system.

The visceral system relies on the interconnected synchronicity between the motions of all the organs and structures of the body. But when one organ cannot move in harmony with its viscera due to abnormal tone, adhesions or displacement, it works against the body's other organs and muscular, membranous, fascial and osseous structures. Imagine an adhesion around the lungs. It would create a modified axis that demands abnormal accommodations from nearby body structures. For example, the adhesion could alter rib motion, which could then create imbalanced forces on the vertebral column and, with time, possibly develop a dysfunctional relationship with other structures. This scenario highlights just one of hundreds of possible ramifications of a small dysfunction - magnified by thousands of repetitions each day.

Visceral Manipulation (VM) relies on the palpation of normal and abnormal forces within the body. By using specific techniques, therapists can evaluate how abnormal forces interplay, overlap and affect the normal body forces at

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