

## PT Classroom - Hope for the Treatment of Retired Athletes by Melinda Roland, MA, PT, LAc, OMD,

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**Melinda Roland MA, PT, LAc, OMD, Dipl-Ac, CST-D**, is a Diplomate Certified CranioSacral Therapist who received her M.A. in Physical Therapy from Stanford University and also has her Doctorate in Oriental Medicine and Acupuncture. She is one of the leading therapists in the CST concussion programs held at Upledger Institute Clinic in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida. Mentored by Dr. John Upledger, Melinda has taught internationally for The Upledger Institute since 1988 and has been in private practice since 1977. Known for evaluation and treatment of pediatric and adult complex cases, Dr. Roland's unique approach to patient care combines her extensive

backgrounds along with nutrition, homeopathy and energetic healing.



**Sally Fryer Dietz, PT, SIPT, Cert**, is a Diplomate Certified CranioSacral Therapist who has served as one of the leading therapists in the CST concussion programs at the Upledger Institute Clinic in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida. She frequently lectures nationally and internationally on the subject of CranioSacral Therapy, Sensory Integrations and Child Development. Also, a leading authority in therapeutic pediatric innovative therapy methods, she has received worldwide media attention for her book, "When Kids Fly." Sally is currently working on her Doctorate in Pediatric Physical Therapy at UTMB in Galveston, TX.

### Hope for the Treatment of Retired Athletes



Attention to concussions has increased dramatically over the past 10 years, in part due to the media coverage of high profile athletes and the effect of multiple concussions and Post-Concussive Syndrome on long term health. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the rate of reported concussions has increased 50% over the past 10 years, although actual numbers appear to vary between studies (1). Head injuries alone are estimated to occur once every 15 seconds and are considered to be the leading cause of death worldwide.

A concussion is defined as an injury to the head that results in a temporary loss of brain function. The consequences of a concussion include both short and long term effects affecting the cognitive, physical, and emotional health of an individual. Symptoms can include a change

in mental status along with the presence of headaches, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, balance problems, fatigue, drowsiness, blurred vision, poor memory and mental foginess (2). These symptoms can continue to affect individuals long after reported injuries, especially when there have been multiple insults to the body, such as in the game of football. In addition to the negative affects of concussion to the individual, there is also significant collateral damage surrounding that individual when the increased rate of divorce, depression, aggressiveness, inability to work & social stress that often follows is taken into consideration. With these factors in mind, the Upledger Institute, in conjunction with the Ricky Williams Foundation, combined resources with the goal of demonstrating the effect an intensive Upledger based, manual therapy program, might have on retired elite athletes with concussive history.

In September 2015, a five-day intensive clinical pilot program, designed for professional football players with post-concussion syndrome or a history of concussion, was conducted at the Upledger International headquarters in Palm Beach, Florida. Six former professional football players from the NFL and the Canadian football league participated. The intensive manual therapy program utilized 3 cutting edge therapies: Craniosacral Therapy, Visceral Manipulation, and Neural Manipulation, all modalities aimed at facilitating the body's self healing abilities. The players were treated by a 25-member multi-disciplinary therapist team hailing from the United States and Europe.

Craniosacral Therapy is a gentle, hands-on treatment modality that modifies and corrects restrictions in the body to relieve pain and dysfunction and improve whole-body health and performance. Developed by

Osteopathic physician John E. Upledger, therapists focus upon identifying, modifying and facilitating correction of restrictive forces within the central nervous system, brain, spine and body. The objective of this pilot study was to investigate and demonstrate if advanced therapies administered by certified, licensed manual therapists will help to alleviate symptoms of post concussion syndrome. Independent pre and post testing, utilizing gold standard methods, were conducted on all players.

At the conclusion of the week's program, all former football players reported feeling significantly better physically, emotionally and mentally, and showed substantial improvement in the majority of their their post-evaluation

testing. According to John Matthew Upledger, CEO of Upledger Institute International, "Our hope is that the NFL will take note of the player's reported improvements and embrace these techniques, so that others suffering from pain and dysfunction can gain access to this treatment and experience the same positive outcomes".

Ricky Williams, who played professional football for 12 seasons, strongly supported the pilot program, encouraging other ex-football players to take advantage of it. Like the majority of other players, he also suffered repeated trauma to his head and body during his career, and received substantial benefit from the treatments both during and after his professional career. In describing one of his best seasons ever, Williams said, "Before the 2009 football season, I went through the CranioSacral Intensive Program at the Upledger Institute looking to deal with some nagging physical complaints I had from past injuries. I ended up getting the relief I was looking for and much more. I credit much of my well-being and my 1000-yard season to the multi-modality manual therapy program I experienced at Upledger."

The Upledger Institute Clinic is recognized worldwide for the care provided by their multi-disciplinary team comprised of osteopaths, chiropractors, physical therapists, occupational therapists, massage therapists, doctors of acupuncture and medical qigong, and mental health counselors - all integrating CranioSacral Therapy, Visceral Manipulation and Neural Manipulation in their areas of expertise.



The results of this study will be submitted for publication next year (2016.) While the preliminary statistics are extremely hopeful, more studies are needed to continue to substantiate the effectiveness of this extremely gentle and non-invasive treatment. In the mean time, there appears to be no downside in using this technique with others who are currently suffering from the long term effects of body and head injury. For more information on finding an Upledger trained health practitioner, go to <http://www.iahp.com> (The International Association of Healthcare Professionals.)

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#### References

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