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## Movement in the Right Direction

Incorporating laser properly and effectively means going to 'sniper school'

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### Online

For a corresponding audio interview with Gray Cook on laser therapy visit [www.advanceweb.com/pt](http://www.advanceweb.com/pt) and look for the Multimedia box.



Everything I do and teach is about functional movement. Whenever we're faced with pain and discomfort, the first thing we do is test the ability to modulate pain through movement.

We look for a direct correlation between symptoms and motor function. Once this is verified and identified, we can go to work on the problem with focus and precision.

Laser therapy is an instrument I use similar to how a sniper uses a rifle. I believe that the ability to powerfully focus and penetrate is one of the biggest advantages of laser therapy over conventional modalities.

There's a common misconception that laser therapy can be aimed in a general area and that one can expect some sort of general result. It's more complicated than that.

Site of treatment, dose, depth, time, and a keen understanding of the underlying issues are all important considerations. I'm not intimidated by tools that force me to think — I welcome the challenge.

Sometimes it seems as if advancements in technology are surpassing our ability to accurately diagnose. But no matter how good the tools become, we still need to go to “sniper school.” Even general tools won't cut it if we're not familiar with them, and if our crosshairs aren't set on the right target with the right intention.

I believe that human interface with technology such as laser is still the weaker link. We must seek to understand the value of the tool, and be sure to incorporate it at the right time for the right reasons.

### Bring in the Reinforcements

At my practice, our treatment approach consists of three primary phases, all of which are equally important. These phases, when performed in succession, provide the body the necessary roadmap for rehabilitation. I like to call them “the Three R's.”

**Reset.** We remove restrictions by engaging in therapy that reacquaints the body with its most natural movement. This is often in the form of a manual therapy, chiropractic adjustment, and dry needling.

**Reinforce.** We create a healthy environment for the body to heal. Performing well in this stage will both leverage our reset and prepare for new physiological programming.

**Reload.** We incorporate this new programming through exercise, strengthening and conditioning. Teach the body to avoid dysfunction and be aware of positive movement patterns.

Laser therapy works tremendously as a reinforcement tool within this model. During reinforcement, we focus on protection and correction. Protection is simply keeping the body from further harm, and correction is our most active stage as therapists. Our reset is enhanced, and we begin inputting into the system. This is where laser therapy, when applied correctly, has the biggest impact potential.

Laser does an amazing job of helping the body through the inflammation process and creates an optimal healing environment. Increased blood flow through the area nourishes the tissue and promotes healing.

Laser therapy after reset helps with any soreness, bruising, or discomfort that results from manual manipulation. Laser therapy embodies the best of all modalities I've had experience with. It's focused and deep, and I can improve the physiology in an area in less time than anything else I've experienced.

Also, an added benefit is the ability to combine two stages — reset and reinforce. When appropriate, I like to use a contact mode of operation with the laser. A ball-type applicator in contact mode allows me to work with the tissue manually, while simultaneously delivering a therapeutic dose of energy. This is a great approach when time is short, and I'm able to administer a “two-for-one” treatment.

Integrating technologies such as laser within the recovery process can significantly impact outcomes. When we think about what we're doing and trying to accomplish, we have the ability to truly make a difference.

### Faster is Better

I spend a lot of time working with performance athletes and military special forces. These arenas can be both exhilarating and stressful due to the importance of getting these assets back to action and back to function.

As you can imagine, time is never on your side, and things never happen quickly enough. Everything is predicated on a tight “feedback loop.”

The genetic makeup of these elite athletes plays a big part in their fast recovery, but so does the treatment they receive. In these

environments, we have increased access and visibility, and still work within the “Three R's” model. We are, however, able to employ many techniques and therapies, and adjust protocols quickly based on how athletes are responding.

This tight feedback loop creates an environment in which we're able to quickly ascertain whether something is working or not. Mobility and performance is so vital that our evaluation model dispenses with all unnecessary treatments. Techniques and therapies that perform in this aggressive atmosphere, under such scrutiny, are the ones that will hold up and be the ones we will reach for.

Laser therapy enables me to deliver fast treatments, and I am confident that I'm accomplishing the most benefit within the shortest period of time. It's simply faster than modalities like ultrasound, and the outcomes are far better.

High-power, class IV lasers provide the secondary benefit of warmth, which leaves a great impression of therapy as the athlete immediately feels the difference afterward.

### On The Clock

Reinforcing our manual therapies and adjustments is an area that we can all improve upon, and that will make an impact on outcomes. Deep-tissue laser, when focused and applied correctly, is one of the best things I've come across to accomplish this quickly and efficiently.

I've always likened two years of professional sports experience to about 10 years in general practice. The feedback loop and the pressure-filled environment keeps you honest as you truly look at the time vs. benefit ratio of everything you do.

Laser therapy is holding up to the rigors of this environment, and is fast becoming the modality of choice for those who treat these elite athletic patients.

In today's physical therapy environment, we're all forced to evaluate the hierarchy of our treatment options, and be ready to go with what provides the biggest impact in the shortest time. Deep-tissue laser absolutely has a place here. ■

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