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## A Flash in the Pan?

Evaluating the consistency of laser therapy in patient outcomes By Matt Contino, DPT



Everything I do professionally, clinically, and personally is based on a philosophy of passion and determination to deliver the best outcomes and results. Whether I am approaching a patient with a difficult diagnosis, or making business decisions, this attitude is the foundation of my methodology across the board.

I have been fortunate enough to open my own clinic where I treat a wide patient population ranging from professional athletes to geriatric patients. Many factors have contributed to my success in general practice. Incorporating the most current technology to assist in providing the most appropriate treatment programs for every patient has been one cornerstone to the growth of my clinic.

Results directly correlate to having the best tools in the tool kit, and this core principle of elevating the standard of care is why I believe in having top technology at my fingertips. This dedication

Matt Contino, DPT, owner and president of Stride Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation, Orlando, Fla., offers laser therapy treatments free of charge. "[It] goes back to my core philosophy of providing the best care possible," said Contino.

to investigating emerging technology is how I initially found out about deep tissue laser therapy, which has become a workhorse at Stride Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation.

### Pioneering New Technology

Over seven years ago, I began working with high-powered laser therapy as a partner of Sleepy Hollow Physical Therapy in New York, one of the first clinics in the country to adopt this kind of laser.

At that time, studies on light therapy seemed promising, though not comprehensive. We brought the therapy laser in on a trial basis to evaluate whether there was a clinical advantage to this new modality.

I remember presenting laser therapy as a treatment option to patients judiciously as "a new option worth a try." That's where it all began. We consistently heard positive feedback from patients and, consequently, started to recommend the laser with more confident conviction.

Gradually the technology started to become more popular and more studies were published. It was encouraging to see the positive results continue in our clinic — and the mounting evidence was supporting what we were seeing.

We were proud to be one of the pioneering clinics realizing measurable clinical successes with deep tissue laser therapy. In the

early trial stages, we found that the application of laser through the massage ball applicator brought in a soft-tissue component that was a great two-for-one treatment option — an efficient, and unexpected, benefit.

Laser began to play a significant role in this general practice because it was effective regardless of age and athletic status. The laser was, and continues to be, my go-to for many kinds of inflammatory situations across a wide variety of patients and specific conditions.

### **The Power of Consistency**

In my experience, some modalities really work, and some don't. My treatment approach is rooted in manual therapy, exercise, and the few modalities in my tool kit that deliver reliable results.

Looking back over the last seven years, I can say that laser has delivered consistent results. This has been constant from condition to condition, patient to patient, and from treatment to treatment.

There are a lot of trendy treatments out there. They come along, we try them, and if the results and the evidence aren't there, they quickly disappear.

That's not been the case with deep tissue laser therapy; it's earned a place in my core repertoire as a key catalyst to help speed recovery. As a clinician, I appreciate this reliability. I apply the laser to appropriate situations, and I feel confident that the laser is going to deliver every time.

### **The Role of Technology**

Several years ago I decided to relocate to Florida to start my own clinic. I continued to uphold the philosophy of Rich Giordano, DPT, senior partner of Sleepy Hollow Physical Therapy — to be the best clinician and get the best results, you must have the best tools and know when to use them.

The three key ways laser therapy has helped me build my new business are differentiation, expanding my referral network in the medical

community, and through word of mouth from happy patients.

Though laser therapy has been a standard of care in my practice for years, it's not in most clinics. I find that it's still a great differentiator for patients looking for drug-free, non-invasive solutions to nagging pain, or for those who want to get back to activity quickly.

Because of the accelerated rate of recovery afforded by laser therapy, I am seeing a lot of weekend warriors as well as professional athletes. Laser is very effective at treating tendonitis and muscle strains, helping attract this active population.

Another way laser therapy helps is through expanding my referral network. I inform area doctors about my individualized treatment philosophy, the latest equipment we have, and how we try to deliver the highest standard of care. Laser is one piece of the overall treatment plan, but it helps show other doctors the kind of technology we offer.

### **Back in Action, Faster**

In my clinic, the value of laser therapy extends beyond a cash-pay model. I have been providing laser therapy as a standard part of treatment for years — at no charge.

My decision not to charge for laser therapy goes back to my core philosophy of providing the best care possible. I felt like charging for the therapy would impact people's decisions. My goal is to get results, so I don't charge, and I recommend laser to people based on clinical need.

Laser therapy gets people back in action faster than the treatment plans I implemented before I had the technology. I can see immediate results as quickly as 1-2 treatments; people are moving better and reporting pain relief.

This accelerated recovery is important to all patients, but particularly to the elite athlete. I've had the pleasure of treating professional athletes from the NFL,

the NBA, USA Track and Field, the PGA, Pro Wrestling and Major League Baseball, and laser therapy has helped many of these athletes return to their sport as fast as possible. These results have led to a large number of word-of-mouth referrals.

I've had patients come in because they have plantar fasciitis they can't get rid of. They've had injections and other treatments that didn't work. Then they hear from a friend that I have a non-invasive treatment option. When I'm able to provide relief, it generates buzz and brings people in the door.

### **Practice with Passion**

In a philosophical sense, if you are going to do something, whether it's starting a new clinic, tackling a new idea, or problem solving a difficult case, the end game is that you want to strive for the best result. You want to give every patient everything you've got.

To elevate standards, surround yourself with the best people, the most thorough treatment philosophy, and the equipment to provide the highest level of care. I appreciate all I've learned over the years working with amazing people at remarkable clinics. I'm proud to practice with passion and instill these concepts of hard work, innovation and excellence at my clinic. ■

*Matt Contino is owner and president of Stride Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation, Orlando, Fla.*