Evidence for Benefit in Other Conditions – How is this Achieved and What is the Relevance for Sports and Exercise Medicine? It is because learning and applying the AT enhances general functioning that it is so beneficial in back pain, and improves the performance of daily activities in people with Parkinson’s disease.

The Alexander Technique has been shown in a large randomised controlled trial published in a peer-reviewed journal, to provide substantial long-term benefit in chronic low back pain.2

Similar enhancements have already been shown in pilot trials for such diverse conditions as performance anxiety and blood pressure lowering in musicians’, respiratory function, balance in elderly people, knee osteoarthritis, neck pain, gait, chronic pain, stuttering, postural tone and surgeons’ posture.

Alternative or Orthodox? Many so-called “alternative” or “complementary” therapies (as well as, recently, some very popular pamphilists) have fallen from favour once properly conducted trials or reviews have shown they are little or no better than placebos (of paracetamol), but each time the minute of scientific or clinical enquiry has hovered over the AT, the results have been positive, all without any gruesome side effects (cf.Botox). In fact, Professor Edith Emmet has nothing bad to say about it! Have a read of the research for yourself at http://alexander-technique.co.uk. Click on “Research.” As a former G.P., nothing I have learned in my 35 years of studying the AT is in variance with orthodox medical science. Further research is ongoing, and unpublished results are promising. Watch this space!

Teachers or Therapists? Like Speech Therapy, the Alexander Technique consists entirely of tuition, but, whereas Speech Therapists name themselves (and the people they work with) for the results of their tuition, Alexander Technique teachers name themselves and their pupils for the process of their tuition, despite the therapeutic results people use when they experience the Technique. Registered Alexander teachers (who belong to the recognised professional body, The Society of Teachers of the Alexander Technique) at http://alexander-technique.co.uk/ undergo a three year full-time training, and members of the Society adhere to a code of conduct and disciplinary procedures modelled on those of the GMC.

Why is AT Not More Widely Prescribed? In my opinion, this is because doctors don’t feel comfortable prescribing something that is outside of their experience. Because AT involves experiential learning, it is notoriously difficult to explain in words. If I try to explain in words the taste of a maracujá, you would find it difficult to imagine, but if I told you that “maracujá” is another word for passion fruit, you might well know. Confucius, he says “he who knows, but he goes through”, here goes: the Alexander Technique is a taught self-help method to promote naturally efficient psychophysical functioning by meticulously awareness and control of one’s proprioceptive and kinaesthetic senses resulting in improved efficiency in performance, whether in the activities of daily living, artistic endeavours or sport and exercise.

He Who Tells, Knows So, what do Daley Thompson, Linford Christie, Sally Gunnell, and John McEnroe have in common with Miriam Wohl, South Leicester’s best known amateur ping pong player? They all attest to the fact that when they use the AT, their performance improves.

“You have to get a teacher to show you.”
— John Cleese

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14 Functional reach improvement in normal older women after an RCT showed statistically significant difference in Functional Reach Test scores for the NICE guidelines for Parkinson’s disease. Berkman L, Roves W, Fraser I. Gait & Posture. 2001;14(2):137-143
Dr Wohl presents the evidence for prescribing Alexander Technique (AT) lessons in Sports and Exercise Medicine.

“Why is the Alexander Technique in the NICE Guidelines?”

Question – Why is the Alexander Technique in the NICE Guidelines?

Answer – Because, unlike physiotherapy, osteopathy, chiropractic, Pilates, yoga and supervised exercise, only the Alexander Technique has been shown in a large randomised controlled trial published in a peer-reviewed journal, to provide substantial long-term benefit in chronic low back pain.3