

Preface

In 1964, at the beginning of my PhD studies at Southern Illinois University, I was first introduced to the theory and practice of proprioceptive neuromuscular facilitation (PNF). One specific application, reversal of antagonists, particularly intrigued me, and served as the focus of not only my dissertation, but also numerous research projects, presentations, and publications over the ensuing years, including the monograph *Scientific Stretching for Sport* (1973). This was the first publication to present a simplified, planar version of reversal of antagonists for enhancing flexibility.

Although I was repeatedly encouraged by friends and colleagues to write a more extensive text, I knew that more laboratory research, methodological fine-tuning, clinical information, and significant changes to the conceptual foundations, were needed before a truly meaningful book could be written.

Throughout my 36 years at Dalhousie University, I have been fortunate to have had a number of excellent graduate students whose theses contributed much of this needed material. Their work has been published in numerous academic journals and is referenced throughout this text.

However, it was not until I was joined in this project by my coauthors that this book became fully realizable. Tom Pelham is one of Canada's leading physical therapy researchers. His productivity has been outstanding, with 60 publications (and senior authorship on 40 of them) over the past 15 years. Impressively, he has achieved all of this without the advantage of an academic post, having spent these years as a clinical physical therapist. In addition to much of the laboratory research, Tom contributed to the literature searches, and is responsible for the clinical applications in this book.

Jason Holt has been involved in this research since his undergraduate years at Acadia University. Concepts from his ongoing, extensive literature reviews have served as the basis for our new definition of flexibility, helped identify significant errors in many of the research articles we have addressed, and shaped our critical assessment of theories advanced and positions held by those considered leaders in the field. In addition to his

semantic/conceptual contributions, his original writing and editing have made this book much more cohesive and concise than it would have been otherwise. It is owing to his efforts that the book reads as if from a single voice.

For this book to be the definitive guide we envision, we think it necessary not only to cover the topic, but to provide a fresh perspective, one that challenges current thinking and professional practice, from the conceptual foundations of research to the practical applications of various techniques in a number of domains. Our objective is to encapsulate in one volume all of the pertinent information on this topic and present it in a clear, concise, and accessible manner.

Unlike other books on flexibility, this one is based on 40 years of research by the senior author, including 15 years of collaboration with the coauthors, years of clinical and practical experimentation, extensive feedback from diverse professionals, and a thorough and critical examination of the works in the field. From the theoretical foundations of tissue adaptation, including our “fascia hypothesis,” to the full gamut of stretching protocols, this book will establish a new understanding of this most important physiological property.

The book is divided into two sections, practical and theoretical. Readers may choose those chapters that suit their particular interests and needs. Coaches, athletes, personal trainers, and others interested in practical applications might choose to focus on Chapters 1 to 6, whereas physicians, physical therapists, athletic trainers, osteopaths, chiropractors, as well as other medical and paramedical professionals, might focus on Chapters 7 to 10. Clinical health researchers, physical educators, kinesiologists, sport and exercise scientists, and others who devote a good deal of their professional lives to this topic, may instead prefer a close reading of the entire book.

Laurence E. Holt

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To Conditioning, Performance Enhancement, Injury
Prevention, and Rehabilitation

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