Preface

Stretching has many uses and forms and is one of the principal tools used in physical therapies. However, in the last decade and a half the therapeutic value of stretching has been eroded by research. These findings leave us with a difficult choice: to ignore them and become clinically irrelevant, or to progress by accepting and incorporating them into our practice. Incorporating these findings means that we have to transform our thinking and the way we apply stretching clinically. This is not a simple task; in particular, as stretching techniques have remained virtually unchanged for decades, or even centuries.

This book is all about the direction and changes that we may need to consider, and how to apply them clinically. In particular, it explores the use of stretching in conditions in which individuals experience a loss in range of movement (ROM).

The book starts by looking at the difference between therapeutic and recreational stretching; whether stretching is a physiological necessity; and the classification of stretching approaches (Ch. 1). This is followed by exploring what constitutes ROM and defining normal and dysfunctional ROM (Ch. 2). From there the book explores the processes associated with ROM loss and recovery, focusing on adaptive processes. Chapters 5–7 explore what makes stretching effective, identifying behaviour as one of the main driving forces for adaptive changes. The motor control component of ROM, and how it is influenced by different stretching methods, is discussed in Chapter 8. The experience of pain, sensitization and pain tolerance in relation to stretching and ROM recovery are discussed in Chapters 9 and 10. In Chapter 11 the psychological considerations in ROM management are addressed, and Chapter 12 integrates all the information from previous chapters and presents a functional approach in therapeutic stretching. This approach uses the individual’s unique movement repertoire to help them regain functionality. A demonstration of this approach is found in Chapter 13 and on the accompanying website. A grand summary of the book is found in Chapter 14.
Interestingly, the message from the sciences is that we should be moving towards a bio-psycho-behavioural-social approach for ROM rehabilitation; away from traditional stretching models that focus on biomechanics and structure. The premise here is that ROM recovery is a multidimensional process intrinsic to the individual but also highly influenced by their environment. The locus of recovery is intrinsic to the patient, not external in the “therapist’s hands”. As such, the role of the therapist needs to be reconsidered: from a provider of cure to a facilitator of recovery; providing support, direction, management and assistance. It is an approach that promotes self-care.

To write this book I have used several sources: studies in the areas of biomechanics, biomedicine and health studies, motor control, psychology, cognition and behaviour, and my own research. Yet, I still found that, despite this vast volume of published research, many theoretical and practical questions about stretching remain unanswered. A pure science-based book about stretching was therefore not the solution. As a consequence, I have committed the sin of adding my experiences from physical therapy teaching and supervising clinicians, yoga instruction, clinical work that spans 26 years and a dose of what seems (to me) like common sense.

This book is suitable for all manual and physical therapists, sports and personal trainers, athletes who require special movement ranges and individuals who would like to recover or improve their range and ease of movement. I hope that this book will present an insight into the fascinating world of stretching and provide you and your patients with an effective therapeutic approach.

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Information on courses: www.cpdo.net
THE WEBSITE

Besides the wealth of information found within Therapeutic Stretching: Towards a Functional Approach, the Publishers have created a unique website – www.therapeuticstretch.com – to accompany the volume. This site contains a selection of video clips which have been specially prepared to allow the reader to practice the techniques described in the volume.

To access the site, go to www.therapeuticstretch.com and follow the simple log-on instructions shown.