

“Getting the Point?”

Part three of a three part series

MyoRehab



By George S. Pellegrino, LMT, CMTPT, RMTI
and Victoria L. Magown, CMTPT, LMT, RMTI

A growing number of people in pain have heard of “trigger points” or “Myofascial Release.” Many have even received “Trigger Point Work” or “Myofascial Therapy” but failed to benefit, while others have received substantial or complete relief.

What exactly is a trigger point and how do you get them? And, why is there such a wide variance in results when treating trigger points?

In Part 1 and 2 of this series (available at www.myorehab.net in the Article Archive) we looked at the mechanism of persistent pain following a whiplash or soft tissue injury. The explanation offered was pain chemistry. Let’s take a closer look now at trigger points specifically.

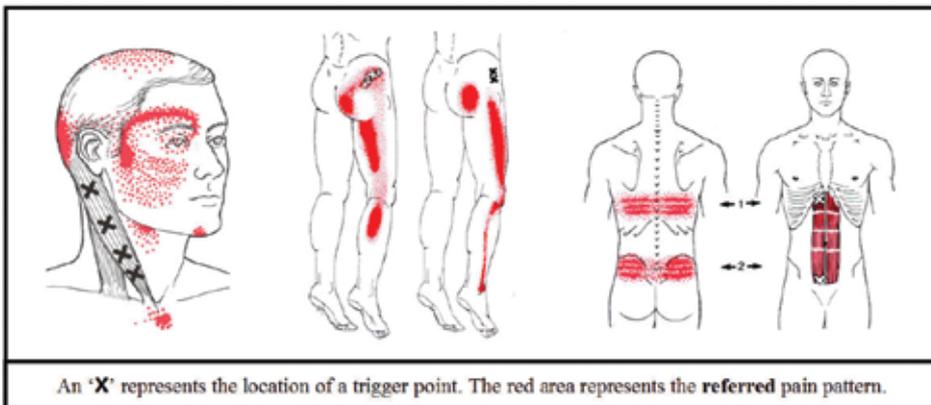
Trigger points can occur in any soft tissue of the body. Myofascial trigger points spontaneously trigger pain. (Myo is Latin for muscle, and fascia is the connective tissue that includes tendons and ligaments.)

Pulled muscle, sprained back, charlie horse, calf cramp, whiplash, tennis elbow or a host of other colorful and descriptive terms all describe essentially the same problem. They can be caused by playing sports vigorously or lifting a heavy box, a car accident, a golf swing, gardening, playing a musical instrument, computer work for hours, or holding a cell phone between your ear and shoulder when your hands are busy.

Each of these is the development of a myofascial trigger point in the muscle or related soft tissue. The net result is pain.

When found in muscle, a myofascial trigger point is identified as a knot. More specifically, it is a hypersensitive, self-sustained contracture. The contracture is a bunching-up of muscle fibers which, in turn, causes a taut band within the muscle from end to end. The taut band pulls relentlessly at the attachments, causing tearing (described as tennis elbow, shin splints or bursitis).

These taut bands produce and trap chemicals responsible for pain. When the contracture is stimulated by movement or pressure, pain is referred in predictable patterns, usually away from the trigger point. That is, there is usually no pain at the trigger point! The pain travels or more specifically, is referred elsewhere. (See illustration.)



This means that searching for the problem at the referred pain zone rarely finds anything to treat. This all-too-often leads to the assumption that the pain must be all in your head. Another aspect of trigger points is that they do not show up on an X-ray or MRI. As a consequence, David Simons, MD, internationally renowned physician and expert in the field of muscle pain said, “Myofascial pain is the most common overlooked diagnosis in chronic pain.”

So why is there such a wide margin between success and failure when treating trigger points? The answer lies in the variance of training. Until recently, a standard for treatment of trigger points was nonexistent. While most training focuses attention on modalities and techniques, the elimination of this ubiquitous source of pain requires an understanding of the neurobiology and pathophysiology of trigger points and the application of an entire treatment protocol.

Working with educators from the United States and Europe, including physicians and researchers specializing in the field of myofascial trigger points, the American Institute for Myofascial Studies has developed a standardized course of study and a protocol for treating trigger points.

Practitioners certified in Manual Trigger Point Therapy, including physicians, physical therapists, massage therapists, nurses, and other licensed healthcare professionals, receive specialized training in the identification, treatment, and elimination of this elusive source of pain and suffering. The application of the Manual Trigger Point Therapy Treatment Protocol by a certified clinician

has become the most significant factor in a successful treatment.

If you’ve made a few points of your own lately, come to **MyoRehab** where we are trained in the application of Manual Trigger Point Therapy. If you’d like to know more about Manual Trigger Point Therapy Treatment Protocol training and certification, or to set up an appointment for an evaluation, give us a call. Our phone number in Albuquerque is 505- 872-3100.

Victoria L. Magown (#4498) and George S. Pellegrino (#2193) are Board Certified Myofascial Trigger Point Therapists and certified by the American Society of Laser Therapy. They are Co-Directors of the Myofascial Rehabilitation Center, Ltd, and Co-Founders of the American Institute for Myofascial Studies, LLC (www.AIMS-LLC.org).

Both are members of and serve on the Education Steering Committee and Board of Advisors of the American Academy of Pain Management, members of the International MyoPain Society and the National Association of Myofascial Trigger Point Therapists.

They have served on the faculty of the University Of New Mexico School Of Medicine and are invited speakers at the American Academy of Pain Management Annual Clinical Meetings, National Association of Myofascial Trigger Point Therapists Annual Conventions, and numerous medical organizations including the United States Military.