

# Sacro Occipital Technique (SOT): A Systems Driven Method of Chiropractic

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**Narrative:** In this paper I give the principles for each of the three Categories applied within Sacro Occipital Technique (SOT) and show how these relate to each of the three primary systems of the body

DeJarnette was a researcher, author, teacher and developer of the SOT systems method of Chiropractic and the principles he gave underpin a clinically solid and successful approach to patient care.

A system strives for equilibrium, a point of balance, a state in which all components of the system are in a state of harmony. The SOT practitioner strives to achieve harmony and balance amongst these three systems of the body.

**Indexing Terms:** Sacro Occipital Technique; Chiropractic; Function; Systems' SOT Categories; SOT Indicators; Objectivity.

## Introduction

**S**acro Occipital Technique (SOT) was founded and developed by Dr MB DeJarnette DC. SOT is based on the identification (via SOT indicators) (7,6,11) of the state of function of three primary systems of the body and the SOT adjustments needed to affect change. These functional systems are referred to as Categories. DeJarnette wrote in his 1980 seminar notes:

'To bring order out of chaos SOT offers the category system.' (6)

... A system is greater than the sum of its parts. The parts are in process governed by a set of organising principles. A system strives for equilibrium. Equilibrium is a point of balance, a state in which all components of the system are in a state of harmony ...'

## Category #1

Category #1 Refers to the Primary Cranial Sacral Respiratory Mechanism (PCSRM). *'Respiratory refers to the inherent motion of the cranial and sacral portions of the PCSRM that allows for tension on the dura and the movement of cerebral spinal fluid throughout, protecting and nourishing, the Central Nervous System'. (1, 6, 7)*



## Category #2

Category #2 refers to the Weight Bearing System of the body. *'It is based on a primary neurological principle, the ability of the body to receive sensory input, the integration of this input and the capacity of the body to respond to that input through the muscles while in the presence of a ligamentous sacroiliac weight-bearing imbalance'*. (6, 7) Often the sacroiliac imbalance is a result of other disturbances throughout the structural systems.

## Category #3

Category #3 *'Addresses lumbar subluxations, lumbar disc lesions, and the condition of the sciatic nerve all in the presence of necessary piriformis and psoas muscle adaptations'*. (1, 6, 7)

## Systems

Meriam Websters dictionary defines a system *'as a group of interacting or interrelated elements that act according to a set of rules to form a united whole'*. (4) The Oxford dictionary states that systems are *'a set of principles or procedures according to which something is done; an organised scheme or method'*. (5)

The objective of this paper is to illustrate the relationship between the SOT method of chiropractic with the principles of a functional system. In my opinion, operationally, SOT is more effective when thought of and utilised as a system driven method of chiropractic.

## Characteristics of a system/SOT

### *A systems method of chiropractic*

**1** A system must process: There is no such thing as a still system. A system is dynamic, energy is always flowing, change is continual. If a system isn't doing something, it isn't a system. A system can only be defined in the presence of function and process. (8)

**SOT:** *'SOT indicators are functional tests and observations that indicate the state of function of each SOT category (category defining) and the adjustments needed to properly adjust the defined category. SOT indicators also monitor patient improvement'*. (6, 7, 11) *'Nothing in SOT is done without a reason and no action is complete until it is re-evaluated, all guided by indicators'*. (1)

**2** A system must coordinate and interface with what is external. Every system operates within an environment and must interface with that environment. Feedback and feedforward are systems terms for information flowing into and out of the system. (8)

**SOT:** The category 2 arm/fossae test analyses the body's ability to respond through the muscle system to multiple sensory stimuli. These sensory organs and structures that are challenged test the integrity of the central nervous system calling on it to interpret the multi-sensory challenges and respond through the muscles. (1, 6, 7)

**3** A systems members are related. A change in one member will cause a change in other members and a change in the system and its organising principles. (8) *'Systems are ever changing processes of self-organisation, growth and adaptation'*. (8)

**SOT:** The interacting components of the PCSRM (category #1) are:

- The inherent respiratory motion of the sacrum.
- The inherent respiratory motion of the cranium.
- The tension of the dura's membranes and its attachments.
- The pulsation of cerebral spinal fluid (CSF) on a cellular level.

- The movement of CFS throughout the Central Nervous System (CNS) (1, 6, 7)

4 A system is greater than the sum of its parts. The parts are in process governed by a set of organising principles. In a functional system the relationship between the parts is synergistic, creating more energy than the sum of its independent parts could provide. (8)

**SOT:** 'The piriformis muscle, a key component of category 3, is important in posture and it tends to elongate in order to stabilize the pelvis in the presence of a lumbar disc lesion'. (3) DeJarnette writes *'the piriformis muscle externally rotates the femur to aid posture.'* (6, 10) DeJarnette further states *'that the category 3 step out toe out manoeuvre shortens the piriformis muscle.'* (6,7, 10)

5 A system strives for equilibrium. Equilibrium is a point of balance, a state in which all components of the system are in a state of harmony. This tendency toward equilibrium helps provide continuity and integrity. Objects in the system can easily and quickly respond and move as new information enters the system. (8)

**SOT:** Heel Tension, Arm Fossae, Step Out Toe Out. *'All 3 of these indicators are both category defining and procedural indicators that are primary to each category. They define the category most in need of adjustment and procedurally indicate when the SOT blocks are needed and when they are no longer needed'*. (3, 1, 11) *'As a system, category 2, strives for equilibrium the precise placement of the blocks with careful control results in a quick and meaningful response'*. (2)

As stated by DeJarnette:

'Man is a segmental unit of a great many diversified structures and chemical elements, blended into one co-operative functional unit by the nervous system. This total segmental being is made to function through its muscular system's response to stimuli. The framework is held together by ligaments, and all revolve around the central spinal column. Let the central column fail in any respect and the total is out of harmony and balance'. (3, 13)

6 A System cannot be changed from within. Change requires assistance from outside the system. Only an object that does not fall under control of the system's operating principles can help affect change in those principles. (8)

**SOT:** DeJarnette understood that these three functional systems (SOT categories) were either in a process of growth or decay. 'He developed an indicator system to identify its state of operation and developed methods to stimulate in a way that the body would learn'. (2, 6, 7)

7 *'A system has a tendency, especially the physiological systems of higher animals, to maintain internal stability, owing to the coordinated response of its parts to any situation or stimulus that would tend to disturb its normal condition of function'*. (4) (Dictionary definition of homeostasis. (5)

**SOT:** In category 1 we have the tendon guard reflex that reacts to the disturbance of the PCSRM. In category 2 the difference in function, left to right, of the muscles surrounding the Thoracic 1/ first rib articulation acts as a unilateral guard reflex in the presence of unilateral

weight-bearing instability. In category 3 the lumbar spinal muscles along with the piriformis (primary) and psoas muscles react to the lumbar problem to maintain stability. (1) All 3 of these category guard reflexes are SOT indicators.

8 A system must self-regulate. A system that cannot self-regulate will lose its identity and cease to exist. Self-regulation provides a base from which a system can respond to stimuli. (8)

**SOT:** The sacroiliac joint is both a respiratory joint, the synovial boot portion, and a ligamentous weight-bearing joint. The synovial boot portion is primary in regulating the respiratory function of the PCSRM (category #1) while the ligamentous portion of the sacroiliac is primary to the weight-bearing system. (category2) (1, 6, 7)

## Discussion

### *Objectivity/Subjectivity*

The SOT indicator system, based on my 46 plus years of SOT practice and study, presents real and observable test and observations (indicators) that determines the category most in need of adjustment as well as the appropriate procedures and adjustments needed to process the category. Indicators both direct and monitor care throughout the entire progression; diagnosis (evaluation), adjustment, outcome assessment and the prognosis. *'Nothing in SOT is done without a reason and no action is complete until it is re-evaluated'*. (11)

Subsequently, treatment plans and case management decisions as well as consultations, discussions and recommendations can be primarily based on objective information continually being processed.

### *System Thinking*

Leading system thinking advocates talk about the interconnectedness of the elements of a system, the emergence of information as the system is processed and the synthesis of the components of a system as the parts connect and form a whole. (12) These principles not only apply to the SOT categories being discussed in this paper but also to the relationship being established between the patient and the doctor. We all know how important communicating essential information can be in establishing the respect and trust that is needed between the doctor and their patient.

'System thinking is a discipline for seeing wholes. It is a framework for seeing interrelationships rather than things, for seeing patterns of change rather than static snapshots'. (14)

## Conclusion

*'DeJarnette addressed the understanding of human function and its identification and treatment by studying basic and primary systems of the body and putting them into three clinically definable but interrelated categories. These categories not only have methods of identification, called indicators, and specific treatment protocols but they give us a model of function for which to strive'*. (2)

My intent in writing this paper is to define and identify SOT as a system driven method of chiropractic. My purpose is to make the readers aware of the scope, the authenticity and the value of the SOT systems method of chiropractic.

I honour Dr DeJarnette for his 70 years of extensive research and study all presented and explained in detail in his yearly seminar notes and teaching conferences.

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