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The importance of addressing the psoas muscle in sacro occipital technique's category two and three:

A commentary

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Indexing terms: Chiropractic; SOT; psoas major; Category One; Category Two; Category Three.

Introduction:

Sacro occipital technique (SOT) (1) notes that sacroiliac joint instability and hypermobility with pelvic torsion (category two) triggers a comprehensive series of compensatory mechanisms that extend throughout the musculoskeletal and neurological systems. A hypermobile pelvis alters proprioceptive input, triggering reflexive psoas contraction and heightened tension in pelvic floor muscles as the body attempts to achieve stability. (2(This muscular compensation, by way of the cerebellar visual and vestibular righting mechanism can create a defensive mechanism affecting the cervical spine and even temporomandibular joint (TMJ) dysfunction. (3-6)

The Psoas Muscle and Sacro Occipital Technique:

Additionally, a hypertonic psoas major augments shear stiffness within the lumbar motion segment, altering spinal biomechanics and leading to dysfunction in both the lumbar spine [category three) and sacroiliac joint.

Category three patients commonly present with lumbar and lumbosacral discopathy, sciatic nerve radicular syndromes, and antalgic body positioning. (7) The psoas major is integral to lumbar spine stability and pelvic alignment, making it a key factor in posture, movement, and overall spinal health. While traditionally recognised as a hip flexor, its role extends far beyond simple

movement. Research suggests that the psoas functions as both a stabiliser and a dynamic mover, adapting based on spinal positioning and load demands. (8)

Because the psoas muscle originates from the lumbar vertebrae (T12-L5) and inserts onto the femur, it has a direct influence on spinal alignment, sacroiliac joint stability, and hip function. Dysfunction in this muscle, whether from hypertonicity, weakness, or asymmetry - can lead to a cascade of mechanical issues in the lower back, pelvis, and lower extremities. DeJarnette the developer of SOT stated 'Category three is a result of the body's failure to adapt to the category two'. (7)

When a category two dysfunction is not properly addressed, it can progress to category three, where more advanced compensatory patterns and structural breakdowns occur. Patients with category three presentations commonly exhibit various types of antalgic postures as a protective response to pain and instability. The psoas major, being a crucial stabilizer of the pelvis and spine, plays a central role in this process. Dysfunction in the psoas can exacerbate sacroiliac joint dysfunction, alter pelvic mechanics, and perpetuate a cycle of neuromuscular imbalance.

Conclusion:

Therefore, recognising and addressing psoas function is essential in both rehabilitation and performance-based chiropractic care. In the SOT approach, restoring sacroiliac stability and reducing pelvic torsion through specific pelvic block placement and associated adjunctive protocols helping regulate the neurological and biomechanical effects of psoas dysfunction. Conversely psoas tension can occur as the body attempts to stabilize a hypermobile sacroiliac joint so treatment to reduce this compensatory tension can be important prior to pelvic block placement used to treat pelvic torsion and associated hypermobility. By integrating these SOT category pelvic block placement methods with specific psoas release and activation techniques, practitioners can effectively manage category two dysfunction and prevent its progression to category three, ultimately improving structural integrity, postural balance, and overall spinal health.

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About the practitioner

Jacky Wong DC is a recent graduate from Life Chiropractic College West, Class of 2024. He has a special interest in Sacro Occipital Technique (SOT), a gentle and versatile method that allows him to care for patients of all ages. Passionate about serving underserved communities, he is particularly dedicated to supporting children's developmental growth through chiropractic care. Dr Wong is committed to making holistic, patient-centered care accessible to those who need it most.

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