

The Burnham Review

VisionIMT, Using Integrative Manual Therapy for Vision

Consider Manual Therapy and Complementary and Alternative Medicine for Optimal Health

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5-15: VisionIMT

5-16: Vis Corneal Disturbance, Keratoconus

5-17: Vision, Cataracts and The Lens

5-18: Muscle Energy, Mobility and Function

5-19: Descended Sacrum Affect on
Brain & Spine

Hands On Solutions for Visual Dysfunctions

There is a Nicaraguan saying, "Eyes that see do not grow old." Many people are asking "how do we see better and better as we age rather than face progressive visual loss as the birthday's come and go." There are more and more people who are improving their vision through the use of hands on therapies from the field of Complementary and Alternative Medicine as well as by shifting diet and nutrition and doing visual exercises.

VisionIMT, a department of the Connecticut School of Integrative Manual Therapy, synthesizes the skills of many different health care practitioners, including massage therapists, physical therapists, functional vision experts, and behavioral optometrists. All are working towards helping individuals improve their visual function, the performance of their eyes and recovery of overall health.¹ (www.CenterIMT.com)

Integrative Manual Therapy (IMT)

clients, literally seeing improvements, include both adults and children with visual labels such as detached retina, lazy eye, visual headaches, migraines with visual auras, cataracts, glaucoma, corneal ulcers, keratoconus, astigmatism and dyslexia. IMT is also effective for clients with conditions involving an eye component, such as spinal cord injuries, multiple sclerosis, high blood pressure, seizures, tinnitus, Cerebral palsy & Down's syndrome.

This approach works for people whose vision has worsened as they have gotten older as well as those with serious dysfunctions. A 40-something client put it this way, "now for the really exciting news! I saw the optometrist yesterday. Eight months ago I had an extensive eye exam. Since then, my prescription changed .5 diopters and, best of all, my astigmatism is gone--completely--30 years worth.

The objective changes are wonderful, but even more so, what it means to me is, my vision is literally not so distorted and I can trust what I see. I realize how

hugely this ties into my trust issues and the ability to trust what I perceive."

There are Advanced Strain and Counterstrain techniques² (Giammatteo, 1997) and³ (Wheeler, L. 2004), that address the ocular muscles and the muscle wall of the blood vessels supplying the eyes. A number of studies have shown that relaxing the muscles of the eyes can significantly improve vision. These easy positional release type techniques address tension in skeletal muscles and the muscle part of blood vessels and organs throughout the head and rest of the body. This approach can be effective with vascular headaches and hand-eye coordination.

Strabismus or lazy eye is another problem of the muscles of the eye and the way the nervous system interacts with those muscles. This is one client's report of her daughter's progress:

"I am giving Taylor a little time to adjust to all the changes that may

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have taken place with the intensive IMT treatment. I'm anxious to see her progress. I'm already noticing that the degree of her eye turn doesn't seem to be as severe. Before her pupil would almost disappear and now that's not the case."

A few months later, she continues,"just wanted to let you all know that the appointment with the optometrist went incredible yesterday. The biggest news was that since the intensive. Taylor's degree of eye turn has gone from an 85 degree turn to a 50 degree turn, solely from the Integrative Manual Therapy treatment. As soon as she gets her new prescription, which should be next week, she will start Vision Therapy."

Then after a few more months, "Taylor's been making some progress. We got her fitted in some glasses that improved the rhythms in her eyes. She's been doing Vision Therapy as well. Her degree of turn has gone from the new 50 degree turn to 45 degrees. Her prescription is also getting better. She was 80/60 and now she's 60/30."

There are a range of IMT techniques addressing the cranial bones, the sutures and joints of the head and neck, with specific techniques to address the sphenobasilar joint which is located near the optic chiasm, the part of the system where the nerves from each eye meet before continuing to the back of the head.

Given the number of small bones that make up the orbit of the eye, trauma to the bony structure can cause significant visual symptoms. The "bone bruise" technique is used to address bone integrity problems of the orbit and face. Additionally, therapists look at the way the joints articulate. This biomechanical

approach can make significant changes to the amount of space and movement in and around the eye. One way to focus on eye biomechanics and function is to look at how the different parts of the eye interface with each other and seeing if there is movement available between the different parts. For example, consideration is given to the relationship between the frontal bone and the zygomas (cheek bones) as well as to the relationship between the iris and the cornea.

Often addressed by IMT practitioners is the connective tissue lining of the cranium, the dural or meningeal layers. From their attachment on the posterior aspect of the eye, the meningeal layers cover the optic nerve and other brain tissue. These connective tissue layers attach to the bones of the head.

Infections from the eye can be communicated to the rest of the brain and spinal cord via the connective tissue. Toxicity can also affect the eyes secondary to a spinal cord or brain tissue infection. There are several hands-on techniques to address the health of the dura and membrane system of the eyes, brain and spinal cord. These techniques are aimed specifically at improving the circulation of cerebral spinal fluid and blood flow within the head. Good cranial drainage and adequate arterial blood flow as well as proper lymph and immune function can make a significant difference in the healing of visual problems.

My own experience is one of considerable healing of my eyes and whole visual system. I have keratoconus, a genetic disorder where the cornea becomes weaker than it should be. I also had nystagmus, where the eyes would get twitchy, especially when I was tired. My

knowledge of what can be done with visual and eye related problems is both professional and personally. I started wearing glasses when I was about 10 years old. About five years ago in my 40's I stopped wearing them one day and pursued IMT treatment to help with my vision, nystagmus, and keratoconus (corneal weakness). All have improved. For a while the nystagmus was only slightly visible when I was very tired and look to the extreme right side. Now it is completely gone. The keratoconus has stopped degenerating and is reversing. I have virtually no dysfunctional light sensitivity, which is usually a big problem with keratoconus. My astigmatism is improving, as is my vision. I have had one migraine headache in the last 5 years, previous to that I had 3-6 severe migraines a year. About 6 months after I stopped wearing glasses, a friend said to me "it is starting to look like you can see." My vision and eyes were so bad it used to look like I couldn't see. The change in the last five years has been so significant for me.

Work can be done with a variety of brainstem mediated reflexes which releases the compression by the musculoskeletal tissue on the eyes, optic nerve, blood vessels serving the eyes and the visual cortex. This can particularly help with nystagmus. The eyes are also involved in a number of reflexes affecting balance, hand eye coordination and upright posture, so balance can improve as vision improves.

Macular degeneration is a problem of the nerve part of the eye (macula), which is the central portion of the retina. An 82 year-old client put her recovery this way, "after 15 hours of IMT treatment, my ophthalmologist said my wet macular degeneration

had not worsened in the previous year. I find that I can read and drive better. Colors seem brighter.”

The neural tissue tension and dysfunction of the eye, optic nerve, optic chiasm, occipital lobe and other central nervous system areas are addressed by focusing manually on the circadian rhythms of the neural tissue. The ciliary ganglion and the stellate ganglion can both be influenced manually resulting in better nerve and eye function.

In “The Eye”, an advanced cranial course, there are a number of techniques that address tear ducts and the tearing function of the eyes in a smooth hands-on way. Tears have a significant lubricating and immune system function keeping the eyes irritation and infection free. These techniques can help with dry eyes.

An easy homework program can also be used to improve vision and eye pain. This can be done with Neurofascial Process,⁴ (Weiselfish-Giammatteo, 2002), where the person places one hand softly over both eyes and the other hand behind them on the low back area, over the ureters (between the kidneys and the bladder). This process facilitates drainage of the eyes and should be done for 15-20 minutes at a time. It can be done daily when you wake up or at another time during the day. The hands can be your hands or you can do this for a child or a friend.

There is also a significant pressure component in many eye and vision dysfunctions. There can be pressure problems in the eye itself that result in a detached retina or there can be pressure relationships between the eye and other areas of the body. For example the heart, kidneys and high blood pressure can contribute to glaucoma. In Integrative Manual Therapy, there are tools to work with

balancing these pressures and reflex point to help in that process.

A client with glaucoma, noted his improvements, “I had laser iridotomy surgery performed for glaucoma, one week prior to seeing an IMT practitioner and it was looking like that may not be effective in lowering my intraocular pressure. After the treatment, my entire head felt relaxed...most importantly my eyes. Two days later, I went to the doctor's office for a pressure check and it was stabilizing at a normal range! I feel, the techniques helped revive the cells in my eyes, and contributed to the stability of my intraocular pressure. I can only hope it continues.” His therapist reported, “after doing just work with the muscles of the diaphragms and the cranial work for the blood flow around the eye, his eye pressure started to stabilize.”

The advanced IMT course for the eye also includes a variety of reflex areas or synchronizers to improve the retina, cornea, iris, optic nerve and more. IMT practitioners may also make recommendations on nutrition.

IMT Practitioners Working with Behavioral Optometrists

CenterIMT offers a variety of services for clients working with Behavioral Optometrists. One of the diagnostic tools, used at CenterIMT is motility testing, which consists of palpating rhythms, such as the heart beat, fluctuation of cerebrospinal fluid, the movement of lymph in the lymphatic system, muscle contraction, and more. These rhythms can be used to determine how a person's body changes and adjusts to different pairs of glasses and how the neuromuscular system accommodates to how we see.

Effects of Treatment

“Visual problems are very

common in today's society and take many forms. A good number of these go undiagnosed or untreated, but are amenable to osteopathic treatment, including functional eye problems and visual strain.” (Dolgin, 2003).

“Remember, the proper prescription will produce the least effect on the body's normal motion and will add no new strain patterns with light coming through the eyes. As the body is one continuous unit, this balanced prescription will not only reduce the physical strain on the head, but also on the neck, shoulders, back and in fact, the whole body. Reducing the stress load on the body increases the level of health and thus, the ability of the body to help itself. Along with osteopathic treatment, this will help resolve chronic strains in the body, which contribute to health problems.”⁴⁵ (Dolgin, 2003).

Comments from Therapists during The Eye, a 3 day Advanced Cranial Class

"Huge improvement in peripheral vision" "Very quick substantial results were noted. I could see more clearly and the eyes felt more relaxed. I also noted a decrease in spinal tension." "I can see much better - I have less eye pain and strain, better range of motion in my neck." "Right eye feels clearer, more relaxed overall." "Last night I was able to sit down and read from a book for the first time in a long time. Usually I have to much eye irritation to read for more than a few minutes."

Biophysiology and Nutritional Wellness

There is nutritional supplements to improve vision the general ones are essential fatty acids and vitamin B complex, for specifics speak to an IMT therapist, who can evaluate what would be best for you.

Drinking Green tea is also beneficial for eye health.

“Epigallocatechin gallate (EGCg), the main polyphenol component of green tea, has several antibacterial properties. Here we show that sub-MICs of EGCg appear to decrease slime production, therefore inhibiting biofilm formation by ocular staphylococcal”⁶ (Blanco, 2005).

“Both green and black teas significantly inhibited diabetic cataracts and caused significant reductions in the biochemical pathway implicated in the development of the pathology. Tea may be a simple, inexpensive means of preventing or retarding human diabetes and the ensuing complications.”⁷ (Vinson, 2005).

Eliminate Alcohol and Processed Sugar for Better Vision

“In addition to alcohol-induced ocular anomalies among children with fetal alcohol syndrome, epidemiologic studies in the past two decades have demonstrated that chronic alcoholism is associated with a significantly increased risk of cataract, keratitis, color vision deficiencies and corneal arcus.”⁸ (Hiratsuka, 2001)

Hands-On Care & Immune System

There are a number of hands-on therapies, recommended by leading expertise in the field of CAM, that support the immune system including massage therapy⁹(Shor-Posner,2006);¹⁰ (Field,2005) and ¹¹(Hernandez-Reif,2004); Integrative Manual Therapy¹²(Burnham,2007)&¹³ (Giammatteo,2005); Qigong¹⁴ (Lee,2003)and¹⁵ (Lee,2005); Reflexology¹⁶ (Lee,2006); Osteopathic Manual Therapy¹⁷ (Noll, 2004) & acupuncture.¹⁸(Karst,2003).

Imagery¹⁹ (Richardson, 1997) and Laughter²⁰ (Berk, 2001) are cheap

and easy ways to help improve our immune system and bring a sense of well being. So, if you want to live well and improve your vision, eat healthy, exercise and take care of your immune system.

Reflection Therapy

The visual component of Reflection Therapy makes it ideal for helping a variety of visual conditions as well as a range of nervous system and limbic system issues.²¹ (Giammatteo, 2001).

Meir Schneider Exercises Sunning

This exercises helps relax the eyes and improve night vision and decrease sun sensitivity on a bright day. Stand facing the sun with your eyes closed. Keep eyes closed throughout the exercises.

Slowly turn your head to the right. Then cover your eyes with you right hand. Then remove your hand and turn your head back to face the sun. always keeping your eyes closed. Then turn your head to the left. Then cover your eyes with your left hand. Then remove your hand and turn back towards the sun, then repeat by turning your head to the right. Repeat 5-10 times several times a day. Each place (facing the sun, turned to the right and turned to the left) should take 3-5 seconds. So one cycle takes 15-20 seconds.

Relaxing Focusing Muscles

This exercises helps improve visual acuity and relaxes the muscles of the eyes that help us to focus. It can also help decrease sensitivity to sunlight on a bright day.

Stand facing away from the sun. Hold your arm out in front of you with your index finger in the air. Slowly swing your finger and body, rotating the finger in front of you. Swing your finger and body to the

right then to the left. As you rotate look at the index finger. Swing from right to left several times while looking at the index finger. Then continue to swing from right to left but look out to the distance. Repeat this several times then go back to looking at the index finger.²² (Meir Schneider www.self-healing.org)

Reflex Point Therapy, Acupuncture and Vision

In a study on the efficacy of tongue and body acupuncture in affecting visual recovery in children with central and peripheral visual disorders, researchers evaluated and treated 12 children with visual disorder with static functional visual ability for at least 12 months

“The causes of cortical visual impairment (10) included severe perinatal asphyxia (4), postencephalitis (1), traumatic brain injury (1), hydrocephalus (1), and increased intracranial pressure (3). Peripheral causes (2) were due to congenital optic atrophy.

Tongue and body acupuncture consisted of 60 sessions, with 5 sessions per week. Four children showed clinical or functional improvement (33%). Of nine children with abnormal visual evoked potentials, five had improvement (56%). Of seven children who underwent PET, six had improvement in glucose metabolism in the visual cortex (86%). Seven parents (58%) reported improvement (3 children had 75% improvement; 4 children had 25% improvement).”²³(Wong, 2006)

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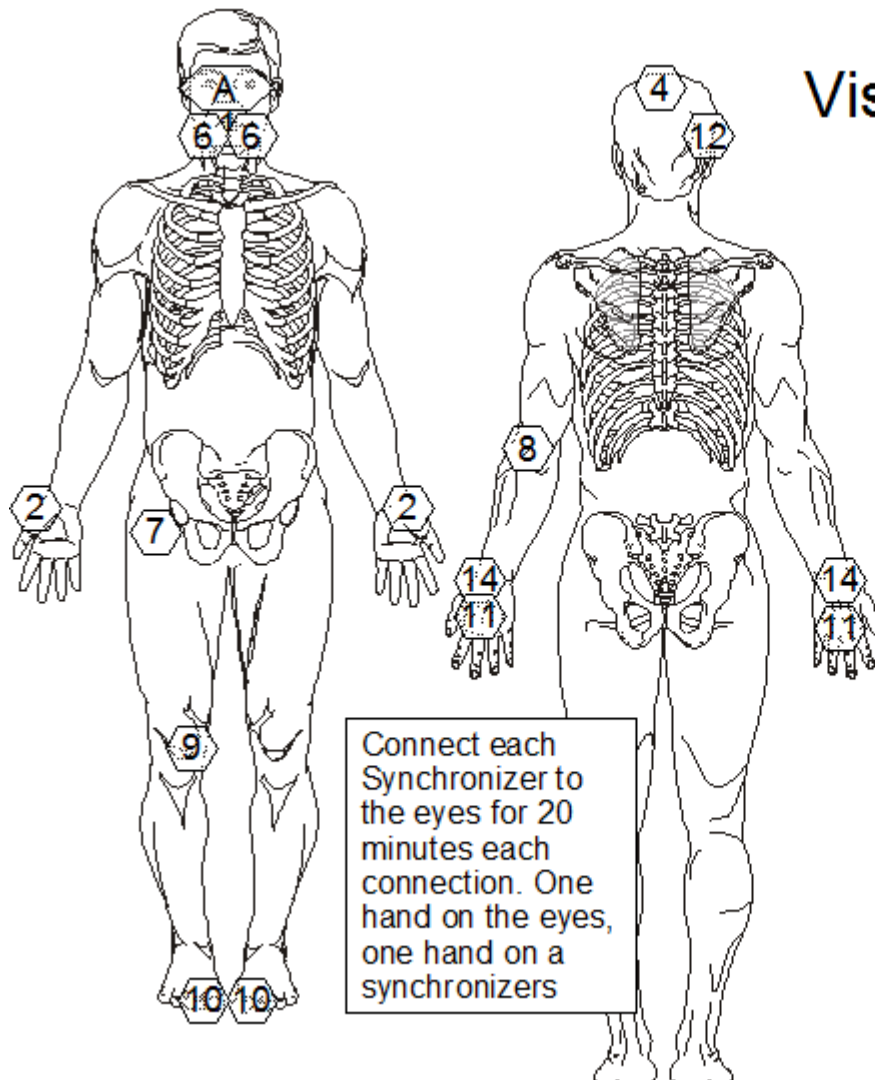
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2. For pictures of the eye and different eye conditions:
www.xalatan.com/health_pro/physician_resources/illustrations.htm
3. For picture on how visual dysfunctions can affect vision: www.nei.nih.gov/photo/index.htm
4. Meir Schneider also has other exercises and information on improving vision at www.self-healing.org

Synchronizers for Vision



Vision Synchronizers

- 1. Below nose and right side of nose
- 2. Thumb side of wrist,
- 3. Inner corner of eye
- 4. Top of head (on each side from Sagittal Suture on Coronal Suture)
- 5. Just in front of ear
- 6. On jaw near canine teeth /eye teeth
- 7. Front of Hip (Right anterior femoral head at the greater trochanter)
- 8. Elbow (Left lateral aspect of olecranon process)
- 9. Kneecap (Right patella, medial aspect)
- 10. On top of both big toes at interface of toenail and toe
- 11. Knuckles and fingers
- 12. Ear (Right temporoparietal suture, just above ear)
- 13. Cheek bones
- 14. Wrist and a little above