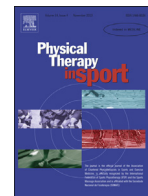




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## Book review

**Anatomy Trains: Myofascial Meridians for Manual and Movement Therapists, T.W. Myers. Churchill Livingstone Elsevier, China (2014). (317 pp.), ISBN: 978-0-7020-4654-4**

I approached this book with familiarity due to its reputation and prevalence in modern literature and courses, yet it is a book I have not read until now, the 3rd edition.

"Anatomy Trains" describes the whole-body myofascial meridians that run at varying lengths and depths through the body. The metaphor relates to railway tracks, stopping at stations (bony landmarks) and occasionally becoming "de-railed" with individual variances. The metaphors don't stop with this book's title. The preface is very arty and in places, cheesy. The reader can easily get lost in the analogies given as it deviates away from traditional scientific books. If its reputation didn't precede it, I may well have stopped here.

The book is designed for quick reference, chapters are colour coded for a quick thumb flick through and within the chapters the text is broken up using keys for different disciplines, with individual icons indicating areas of interest for manual therapists & movement therapists, icons highlighting information that is available on the accompanying website and material that can be accessed by purchasing an additional DVD.

Sticking with the metaphorical theme of the book, it seems appropriate to describe it metaphorically. The book approaches anatomy in a superficial way to other anatomy books, by that I mean if traditional anatomy books are the foundation of our education, isolating individual muscular attachments and actions, then this book is the next layer of annotate paper laid on top. It approaches postural compensation and movements as a whole body approach and describes how muscles may interact with each other via these "meridians" of myofascia.

Myers considers the fascia and the relationship it has between muscles where historically anatomists have trimmed away at it like ivy covering an old building. Instead of discarding it, he considers its role in kinesiology and biotensegrity (brilliantly explained and depicted in chapter 1). Myers encourages the reader to forget about the matter-of-fact attachments of muscles as we know them, explaining that fascia is continuous in multiple planes, that our understanding of a muscle starting and stopping is actually just human intervention to confidently aid education. Using examples of movement patterns, with illustrations and cadaveric images, it is hard to deny the proposed relationship between multiple

muscles, which are not to be confused with the traditional muscle groups that we know. It seems counter intuitive, but to think in the terms intended by the book, forget about muscle groups like the quadriceps, instead consider the muscles individually in order to consider them as part of a larger myofascial chain.

The "rules" to following Anatomy Trains are outlined in chapter 2 and just like a train journey, the rules take you from a zone of understanding and acceptance to an area of confusion – there are perhaps too many diagrams trying to explain the "rules" and the text regularly jumps from a metaphor to scientific explanations. It is almost as if they are unsure of who the target audience is and as such the writing style attempts to appease both the lay person and the clinician.

In fact, the book is much easier to follow if you skip chapter 2. The individual chapters for each meridian contain much more succinct diagrams and cadaveric images to describe postural function at each joint and as a whole system. Each chapter describes the role of the meridian in postural control, cleverly isolating each involved joint before expanding to the biotensegrity model for that line. Each chapter is then completed with discussion points and references.

The book culminates with chapters 10 & 11 unifying the individual meridians and describing their application in therapy and structural analysis. In these concluding chapters, Myers describes a world that is impoverished of movement education, where clinicians are blinded by evidence based practice and there is a stark need for unified terms, both inter and intra-professionally.

"Anatomy Trains" is certainly not devoid of personality. It is this personality combined with a non-scientific writing style, yet supported clearly with scientific references, that makes or breaks the book as a reader. If approached with an open mind then there is a clear working theory that flows throughout the text and even now in its 3rd edition, the book appears novel and rogue. Look beyond the salesmanship and self promotion of "Anatomy Trains" and there is a clinical relevance to this book that could change the thinking of most physiotherapists and encourage a more "whole body" approach to therapy.

Sam Blanchard

Head of Academy Physiotherapy, Brighton & Hove Albion Football Club, American Express Stadium, Village way, Falmer, East Sussex BN19PL, UK