

The Mulligan Concept

Mulligan Concept

Brian Mulligan, FNZSP, Dip MT has been an international lecturer in manual therapy since 1972. He was awarded an Honorary Fellowship of the New Zealand Society of Physiotherapists. Throughout Mulligan's years of experience and education he developed the Mulligan Concept.

The Mulligan Concept combines passive joint mobilization with active patient movement to diagnose and correct positional faults, and restore patients to normal pain free function. Mulligan's Concept is weight bearing, uses patient feedback and functional movement.

Basic Principles

The seven basic principles to the Mulligan Concept are as follows:

1. During assessment the therapist will identify one or more comparable signs, a loss of joint movement, pain associated with movement or pain associated with specific functional activities.
2. The therapist applies a passive accessory joint mobilization following the principles of Kaltenborn¹. This accessory glide must be pain-free. The therapist can use the Mulligan Mobilisation Mitt to eliminate the discomfort of manual contacts on bony landmarks such as spinous processes and the facet joints. This permits the patient to be more relaxed during the movement of mobilisation.

3. The therapist continually monitors the patient's reaction to ensure that the mobilization is pain-free.
4. While sustaining the accessory, the patient is asked to perform the comparable sign. The comparable sign should now be significantly improved.
5. If the mobilization fails to improve the comparable sign, the patient's symptoms may be the result of something other than a positional fault and the Mulligan Concept is not indicated.
6. The previously restricted or painful motion or activity is repeated by the patient while the therapist continues to maintain the appropriate accessory glide. Further gains are expected with repetition during a treatment session typically involving three sets of 10 reps.
7. Further gains may be realized through the application of passive overpressure at the end of a range. It's expected that this overpressure is also pain-free.

Self-Treatment

Self-treatment is possible with the guidance of a healthcare professional and using these techniques. Many of these techniques use adhesive tape and/or the patient providing the glide component and active movement. *Self Treatments for Back, Neck and Limbs: A New Approach* by Brian Mulligan is designed as a patient self-help guide. This book is intended as a complement to Mulligan trained therapist treatments. Concepts such as posture, Self-Snag techniques, exercise, taping techniques and Pain Release Phenomenon Techniques are explained.

¹ Kaltenborn, Freddy, Prof.
Manual Mobilization of the Joints: The Extremities 6th Ed.
Manual Mobilization of the Joints: The Spine 4th Ed.

Mulligan Aids

Mulligan has created many products such as The Mulligan Seating Concept, which keeps the knees below the hips, allowing one to maintain the lumbar lordosis while sitting. Another product used in conjunction with physiotherapist Brian Mulligan is the interactive CD-ROMs: Mulligan Home Exercise. These exercises originate from The Mulligan Concept. This is the first offering of Mulligan Concept techniques on digital media, which includes correct motion of 'SELF SNAG' technique and home exercise. Mulligan's 'SELF SNAG' straps, used in CD-ROMs, allow the clinician trained patient to administer joint release to the lumbar and cervical regions of the spine easily and effectively. Kendall Wet-Pruf® waterproof tape is recognized quality tape for general taping needs and outpatient use that Brian Mulligan refers to in his book *Self Treatments for Back, Neck and Limbs: A New Approach*. He mentions a few taping techniques throughout his book to address conditions such as plantar fasciitis, trochanteric bursitis, muscle strain and sprained ankle.

There is an increasing amount of articles and studies demonstrating The Mulligan Concept effectiveness. It is developing a higher profile and will soon be a technique that could become the standard of care among manual therapists.

References:

Postollec, Mike Le Mobilization with Movement. Advance for Physical Therapist & PT Assistants (Jan. 7 2002).

Senior, Rob 'Minor Miracles': Mulligan technique gives immediate relief to chronic pain sufferers. Advance for Physical Therapist & PT Assistants (Sept. 30 2002).

