

## Science Validates Functional Manual Therapy's Art of Healing

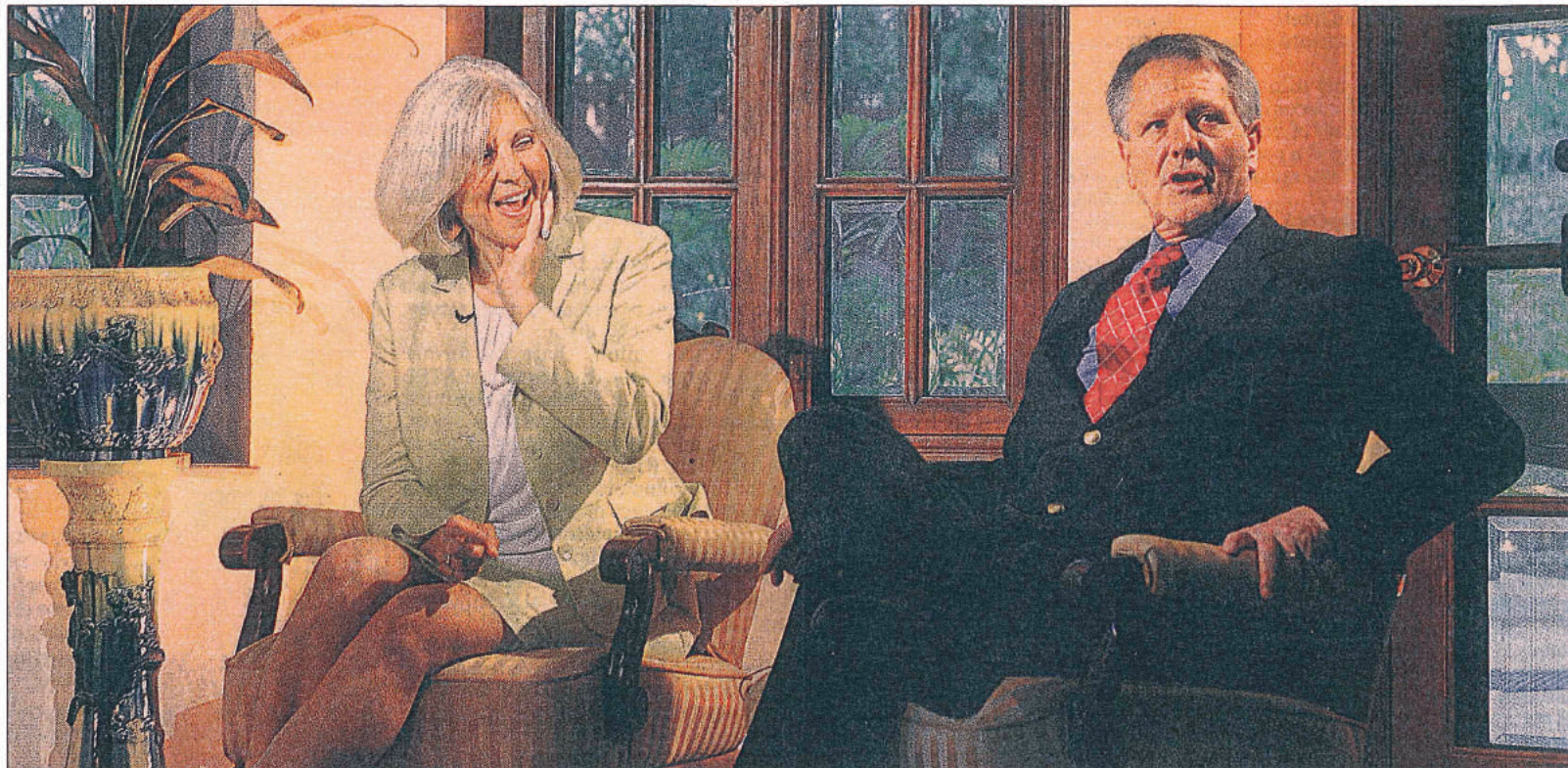
Vicky and Gregory Johnson reveal how scientific studies are now validating exactly how Functional Manual Therapy makes patients feel better – and heal quicker

Vicky and Gregory Johnson have not let the effusive praise for the magical effectiveness of their pioneering Functional Manual Therapy™ (FMT) lull them into complacency. As they prepare to go international with the launch of their services at VARDĀN in New Delhi — and then New York and Japan — they are busy “taking it to the next level” by stepping up their research activities too, to cement the advances FMT has made with scientific validation of its results.

“By its very nature, the system that we have created needs to develop and evolve constantly,” says Vicky, elaborating that the idea behind their extensive research activities — bolstered by new data gathering tools and Gregory’s research into soft tissue mobilisation — is to use science to validate their work. “We will present strong evidence that we are not just making people feel better: FMT is bio-mechanically and physiologically changing the human body!” Adds Gregory, “The world has been so focussed on pathology and dealing with problems after their development, that true prevention has not been addressed!”

“It is sad that we believe we have to live with a certain amount of dysfunction,” says Vicky, recounting an incident when a person denied any problems, but on examination was found to have major anomalies. “Our goal is to make them aware that they can feel better and not have the problem.” Gregory’s tale of a lady who had cardiac and breathing challenges that were not solved by medicines, underlines Vicky’s point. He found the actual cause was a car accident a year before the symptoms appeared, which caused a restriction that led to her problems. He brought her relief in a 20 minute session!

“If you remain weak, ultimately your body will fall back into its old patterns,” says Vicky. “So we developed tests to show that we were affecting the whole system. We are excited that these tests, which we have used on over 20,000 people in the US over the past 30 years, are now in the process of being validated!” The positive results of two rounds of research by Stanford (for its robotics programme) using key FMT assessment tools — promises to give FMT the level



Vicky (left) and Gregory Johnson: “We want the opportunity to examine every function, to see if we can make a difference to someone by improving their structural health”

of validation that the scientific world demands, for its ability to link relief from pain to a change in function.

The purpose of this scientific validation is two-fold: first, for peer acceptance as a valid therapy, and second, for people to be aware that this is a system that is proven to be safe and can offer real relief from pain and restricted mobility, and improve fitness. “There is not another organisation out there that truly teaches physical therapists to treat the whole body, and spend time going beyond symptoms to properly evaluate,” she avers about the transformational nature of FMT and its uniqueness.

She cites the case of a Grammy award winning producer whom she flew over to treat in intensive 2-3 hour sessions

over two days. “By the end of 5-6 hours of work, there was still so much more to do in terms of evaluation. That is what drives us beyond what most physical therapists are doing, and news of the results that our certified FM therapists achieve, is catching on!” This has given the Johnsons even more reason to pursue new areas of research, including at the VARDĀN centre, to further equip FM therapists with tools to heal and prevent. Despite doing solid work in the area of

soft tissue mobilisation, Gregory has developed a new course in Resistance-Enhanced Manipulation (REM), which they will use, and teach their certified FM therapists to use in India. And the difference is crucial. While both treat specific issues, in mobilisation, as Gregory puts it, “there is no use of force to create a ‘noise’; manipulation, however, means a quick directed movement to produce an improvement in a range of motion in joints and soft tissues.” The principle is the same as when people

press the fingers of their hands together make the bones ‘pop’, says Vicky — the action releases pressure in the joints immediately, which mobilisation, due to its gentleness, may not be able to address. Where Gregory’s REM differs from the way chiropractors have been ‘popping’ joints for years is that it “induces a very specific muscular contraction to produce a physiological change that is protective of the joints and soft tissues”.

Apart from getting another round of scientific studies this summer to validate one of his most path-breaking projects — the identification and successful treatment, without surgery, of the torn meniscus (a very painful ailment affecting runners) — Gregory is now focusing on fascia or the lubricating “extra cellular

matrix” that allows muscles and tissues to slide, as problems there can prevent movement. Using two muscles of the calf as the test area, Gregory has been using new technology to assess the tension between them and then apply FM techniques to increase movement, reduce strain and reinstate “muscle play”.

Gregory says that be it the ‘compartment syndrome’ that many athletes suffer in their calves and shins due to lack of oxygen (for which FMT has a far quicker recovery than surgery!), scoliosis, or as common an ailment as a headache, migraine or dizziness, FMT can alleviate and even eliminate pain and discomfort using out-of-the-box evaluation and methods. And in the course of that regimen, they inform their patients about how to have a healthy system and “how to use their bodies to minimise stress every day” as Vicky describes it.

The idea of the research is to pinpoint — to the satisfaction of the scientific world, therapists and the patients who feel better — what exactly does FMT do to dramatically improve movement and restore optimum function. They also want people to know they have an option to feel better. “We are not God, but we want the opportunity to examine every function, to see if we can make a difference to someone’s body and life by improving their structural health,” says Vicky. And they hope that their faith in FMT will be echoed not only by patients, but also by doctors!

Their India plans include a new angle too: intensive treatment, for 3 to 5 days in a row, for patients to have their bodies evaluated, worked and trained, so that they leave as changed people! No weekly appointments, no “playing catch-up” as Vicky calls it, since the sessions are short. The patient will also leave fully equipped with exercise and nutrition information, even psychological inputs, to live changed lives! It is the ultimate pampering — making you not only feel better, but BE better. Permanently.

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