

The History and Development of Hendrickson Method

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The development of Hendrickson Method (HM) took place over decades and was influenced by many practitioners and teachers, a devotion to learning how to help people in pain, and the experience of working with tens of thousands of patients in a clinical setting for nearly 40 years.

I began my path in the healing arts in 1972 when I participated in my first massage class that was part of a teacher's training course in yoga. Almost immediately I began to appreciate the healing power of touch as I felt streaming energy after the massage and was fascinated and eager to understand what was happening. I took more massage classes, and in 1974, I completed a year-long training in shiatsu massage with Riuho Yamada, a Zen priest and shiatsu master. Master Yamada's treatments had tremendous power, which I believe resulted not only from his technical skill but also from his lifelong practice of meditation. I realized that his effectiveness was not related to how hard he worked, but to the way he combined his internal energy with outward movements. This insight has been reinforced throughout my years of developing my internal energy.

In 1976, I participated in an intensive, 4-month residential training program in Lomi work, a form of deep tissue massage that also supports emotional release. Lomi work was developed by Robert Hall, MD, et al., and synthesizes the work of Ida Rolf (Rolfing), Fritz Perls (Gestalt therapy), and Randolph Stone (polarity therapy). Lifelong postural habits and emotional patterns are often dramatically changed with Lomi work. But as I worked with clients, I found that the deep tissue and shiatsu approaches are limited when it comes to treating acute injuries,

and that deep tissue work was hard on my body. After a day of giving treatments, my hands, neck, and shoulders were often aching. This set me on a quest to explore effective ways of helping people in pain as well as to find a way of working that was gentler on my body. During this same period, I began my study of tai chi and training in Vipassana meditation. I added these two practices to my daily yoga practice to focus on developing my internal energy and capacity to be a vehicle of healing.

The greatest influence in my career came in 1978 when I met Lauren Berry, PT. By then, Lauren had been a healer for more than 50 years. He began his training with a Finnish doctor who taught him massage and manipulation. As a physical therapist and mechanical engineer, Lauren had a very pragmatic “nuts-and-bolts” approach to manual therapy. He used manipulation of the soft tissue and joints to correct mechanical dysfunctions in the body. His treatments were quick, precise, and effective. I trained with Lauren for 4 years. My last year was an apprenticeship, in which I assisted him in treating thousands of people. His work had not been previously documented, and I felt deeply honored when he permitted me to record his method of manipulating the joints. *The Berry Method, Volume I: The Joints* was published in 1981. Unfortunately, Lauren died shortly after completing the first volume, so the planned second volume on soft tissue was never realized.

Lauren’s contributions to the treatment of soft tissue injuries were original and invaluable. He theorized that all the soft tissues in the body have a specific position relative to the neighboring soft tissue and its associated joints and that massage needed to be applied transverse to the line of the fiber, in specific directions, to correct its positional dysfunction. Lauren observed predictable patterns of soft tissue misalignment throughout the entire body and developed a system of manipulation to correct those dysfunctional positions.

Much of Lauren's method involved high-speed joint manipulation, which is not within the scope of practice for massage and most manual therapists. This reality inspired me to become a chiropractor. I began my 4-year chiropractic training program in 1982 so that I could practice Lauren's method. But I soon realized that I wanted to make Lauren's work available to all manual therapists. I realized that in order to do this, I needed to create a way to change Lauren's high-speed joint and soft tissue manipulations into gentle mobilizations, while maintaining their therapeutic effectiveness. In addition, Lauren's style was often incompatible with a relaxing massage, and I became determined to create a treatment that was as relaxing for the client as it was therapeutic. It was my personal goal to be as gentle as possible without sacrificing therapeutic results.

As I developed the techniques that would eventually become known as HM, I used Lauren's theories as a guide and created my own style. Over years, I developed a "choreography," a treatment sequence, for each region of the body. Many of my clients came in with severe low back pain, and the only comfortable position for them was in a side-lying fetal position supported by pillows. Placing clients on their side for work on the spine also allowed me to stand upright during the treatment rather than leaning over the table. This ergonomic position supported my back and joints and made it possible to work comfortably and effectively.

In the process of developing soft tissue mobilizations to replace Lauren's manipulations, I realized that the transverse strokes Lauren emphasized needed to be changed into slower, deeper strokes. My experience with the slow, gentle power of tai chi led me to study how energy moves through water, particularly the water in the human body, since the body is two-thirds water. Over time, water will dissolve stone, and I wondered how this power could be directed for healing. As energy moves through the ocean, it creates waves that are perpendicular to the shore,

so I started experimenting with a rounded, wavelike stroke, transverse (perpendicular) to the fiber (the “shore”). My patients responded to this new stroke beautifully. I decided to call it wave mobilization®. Wave mobilization strokes are unique in the field of soft tissue because they sink into and through the soft tissue rather than across the fibers, allowing for a broadening of the fibers deep within the structure.

As I performed wave mobilization, I stood in a tai chi upright position and moved my whole body back and forward with each stroke, staying as relaxed and supple as possible to allow energy to flow freely. These strokes rocked my patients in rhythmic oscillations and created subtle wavelike movements through the patient’s entire body. These rocking movements had a quieting and calming effect that supported the healing process. I then began to explore different frequencies of applying the wave mobilization strokes and found that performing the strokes to the rhythm of the resting heartbeat, about 60 cycles per minute, had the most profound effect on the nervous system. As I was performing these rhythmic oscillations, I too became more relaxed internally and noticed an expansion of my own energy field. The therapy that I was giving became a method to develop my own internal energy and was healing for me as well.

During my chiropractic education I learned about the role of the nervous system in maintaining health and its role in dysfunction, injury, and degeneration. I studied the vast reflex connections between the soft tissue, joints, and central nervous system and gained an appreciation of the profound neurophysiological effects of joint mobilization. This led me to incorporate joint mobilization techniques into my soft tissue work, which achieved better results with less effort. These were not the high-speed, low-amplitude thrusting techniques associated with the chiropractic adjustment; rather, they were techniques that involved gentle, rhythmic, oscillating movements of the joints.

As my new system of treatment was coming together, I still faced two challenges in helping to bring my patients' musculoskeletal systems to optimum function. One, some patients were so tight that it was too much work to release their tension. And two, some patients would return week after week with the same tight muscles. I needed to find a way to release hypertonic muscles more easily and a way to work with the nervous system to correct habitual patterns of tension. Studying muscle energy technique with Vladimir Janda, MD, and Karel Lewit, MD, two physicians from the Czech Republic, was the answer to my prayers. These remarkable pioneers in manual therapy developed methods of treatment for the nervous system in the tradition of proprioceptive neuromuscular facilitation. Some texts, including this one, call these techniques muscle energy techniques (MET). The techniques are remarkably effective to reprogram the nervous system to "turn off" hypertonic muscles and reset the muscles to their resting tone and resting length. It was so much easier and more effective than applying deeper and deeper soft tissue work, and MET could also be used to recruit inhibited muscles, thus improving overall functional communication between the nervous system and the muscles. I added METs to joint mobilization and wave mobilization and began to experience a new level of success in efficiently and effectively treating my patients in pain.

There is one more piece to the development of HM that I sensed was crucial and that became clear with the guidance of excellent teachers and practice. From my first experiences in massage, I understood intuitively that energy transmission was an essential element in treatment. I was very fortunate early in my career to have the opportunity to study with two remarkable energy healing practitioners, Muriel Chapman, DO, and Rosalyn Bruyere. They demonstrated to me the tangible power of energy medicine and how strong healing energy currents can stream

through the body with the lightest touch. I learned that the human body emits electromagnetic fields, called the biofield, and that this field can be developed and focused for healing.

With this knowledge and understanding, I continued to devote myself to developing an internal healing state to prepare myself before a day of treatments—using yoga, tai chi, and meditation. Over time, I learned through firsthand experience that my daily internal energy practices, and fostering a kind, compassionate presence with my patients, translated into an increase in clinical effectiveness.

Recognizing the profound power of energy healing in the clinical setting, I made these practices central in the development of the HM system. The internal energy of the therapist and *how* a treatment is given is as important as *what* to do when performing the techniques.

Developing HM has been a transformational journey for me for which I am deeply grateful. It is incredibly fulfilling to have created a system that helps relieve pain and restore function through a treatment that is both relaxing for the patient to receive and for the therapist to perform and to train therapists for decades and see that my results are reproducible.