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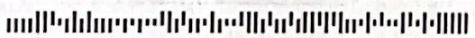
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RESEARCH: MANUAL LYMPH DRAINAGE MAY PROMOTE FLEXION FOLLOWING KNEE SURGERY

# Conscious Conception

## Mercier Therapy Enhances Natural Function

by Jennifer Mercier, N.D., Ph.D., L.M.T.



**M**ercier Therapy is a deep, pelvic-organ, visceral manipulation technique in which the reproductive organs are mobilized and blood flow is restored; organ restrictions are relieved and movement is replenished throughout organs and surrounding structures to enhance their natural and optimal function.

The Mercier Therapy protocol is a six-hour regimen broken up into weekly, one-hour sessions in which therapist and client work via the abdomen to accomplish the goal of releasing organ restriction. It can be used as a stand-alone regimen, without the use of allopathic therapies, or to prepare women for assisted reproductive cycles. No one should run a race without proper training; likewise, no one should undergo medically assisted cycles without preparation to optimize the very first cycle.

Many women who receive Mercier Therapy have undergone some type of pelvic surgery or procedure that resulted in creating adhesive-like scar tissue; yet,

organ mobility and blood flow are crucial for optimum functionality.

To better understand this, think about a shoulder injury. What would happen if that shoulder was not properly rehabilitated? The injured shoulder joint and musculature would become stiff, blood flow would eventually be restricted, and pain would become the new normal. This same scenario can happen anywhere in the body; but when it happens in the pelvic area, infertility can arise.

Does reproductive-organ immobility contribute to infertility? In my experience, it does. To understand this better, think again about the shoulder-injury scenario and apply that concept of restriction to the heart, lungs, stomach and liver. None of these organs could function optimally with a semipermanent restriction in any other organ. All of our organs should move against each other flawlessly upon inhalation. A restriction in any organ's movement could cause damage elsewhere, resulting in a cascade of effects.

Mercier Therapy concluded a four-year, evidence-based research study in September 2012, indicating an 83-percent pregnancy success rate.

### Development of the technique

When I went to massage school in 1994, the massage profession was very sports- and relaxation-therapy oriented. Most elective classes focused on the whole body, with the goal of massage therapy for rehabilitation or relaxation. After I graduated, variations of bodywork modalities became of interest to me because of their clinical aspects. I had also become interested in midwifery and women's health in general, and studied Kate Jordan's Bodywork for the Childbearing Year. I loved the work, and I trained as a midwife. As a midwife, I spent many hours delivering babies in home birth, birth center and hospital settings.

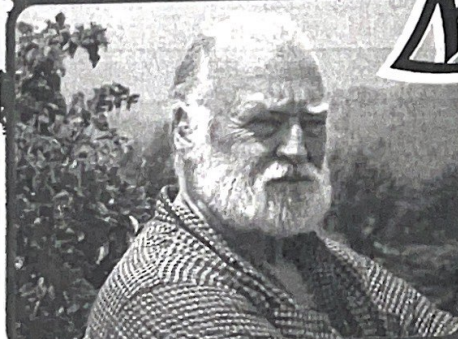
Then, for two years during my undergraduate studies, I worked in private practice and as a fertility clinician at a large reproductive endocrinology practice. I learned how to monitor a woman through a medically assisted reproductive cycle, such as in vitro fertilization (IVF);

and how to perform intrauterine insemination. The work was both fascinating and puzzling. When performing an ultrasound or insemination, I would sometimes notice the fixation and immobility of the uterus.

I proceeded to learn as much as I could about women's pelvic pathology and anatomy. My path led me to osteopathic manipulation and gynecology. A friend, Richard Demir, M.D., an obstetrician and gynecologist, allowed me to follow him to observe gynecologic surgical cases.

Watching him perform hysterectomies, laparotomies and laparoscopies, I learned how a surgeon thinks and operates. I witnessed how he dissected scar tissue from prior pelvic surgery, determined the length of time in which to finish the case, and how to be careful in technique to not damage the organs and surrounding structures. The time it took to clear the area of scar tissue needed to be kept to a minimum, so the patient was not

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kept under anesthesia longer than necessary. Once the scope was placed into the abdomen, I saw that proper blood flow and optimal function happen when organs can move effortlessly against one another. It was clear to me scar tissue is a main culprit of lack of organ mobility.

I already knew I wanted to specialize in women's health, but couldn't find the course of study appropriate for my scope of licensure. Pregnancy massage was wonderful, but it didn't address women who were trying to conceive. Most courses that introduced gynecologic surgical procedures discussed how to prepare women for natural conception; and taught hormone trends, female pathologies and fertility cycles were geared toward physical therapists and included vaginal (pelvic floor) work.

I ventured on a course of discovery in women's health care, focused on both Western medicine and holism. My journey took me to France, Mexico, Jamaica, Switzerland, Holland, Austria and Italy. Later, when I decided to start a family, I knew getting pregnant would be a slow process due to my diagnosis of stage-four endometriosis. At age 35 and never having been pregnant, I did multiple rounds of acupuncture, went to meditation classes, practiced yoga for fertility, took numerous supplements, ate a clean diet and engaged in plenty of gentle exercise. All of those helped me relax and feel I was helping myself become pregnant.

Since I had gone through three laparoscopies, I knew my pelvis would have a great deal of scar tissue. Moving forward, I was told by my reproductive endocrinologist that I needed IVF, but in my heart I believed otherwise. He told me my organs were in poor condition and my husband and I would have a 19-percent chance of conceiving on our own. We felt most comfortable trying a drug called Follistim along with intrauterine insemination. We did three cycles, and I did not get pregnant. Then, after a group of my professional Mercier Therapy students worked on me, my husband and I conceived without drugs or insemination during the very next cycle. I did miscarry that pregnancy, and the second one too. But I was getting pregnant, and that was a good sign. My third pregnancy was the charm, and I delivered a healthy baby girl in October 2011.

I fully believe if I hadn't received Mercier Therapy, my husband and I wouldn't have our beautiful daughter today.

Mercier Therapy concluded a four-year, evidence-based research study in September 2012, indicating an 83-percent pregnancy success rate. The abstract, "Mercier Therapy Helps Infertile Women Achieve Pregnancy" was published in the spring 2013 edition of the journal *Midwifery Today*.

### A Mercier Therapy session

In general, women who seek Mercier Therapy tend to be anxious, because any woman who desires to become pregnant and is facing infertility will typically experience both depression and anxiety. Complementary and

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Felicia Brown, L.M.B.T., is the author of *Every Touch Marketing: Free & Easy Ways to Promote Your Massage, Spa & Wellness Business*. She is also the owner of *Spalutions* ([www.spalutions.com](http://www.spalutions.com)) and provides business and marketing coaching to massage, spa and wellness professionals.

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alternative approaches to aid in infertility are common, with yoga and acupuncture among the most popular. Relaxation is crucial, so acupuncture or yoga can be an entry into meditative, deep breathing.

An initial visit with a Mercier practitioner consists of a 90-minute, in-depth consultation that includes taking a medical-gynecological-obstetrics history; evaluation of pelvic movement and organ position; and time to discuss findings and course of action with the client. Once the client agrees to the six-hour therapeutic protocol, the first session is scheduled.

During the first session, the practitioner works to create balance in ligaments, musculature and pelvic organs. The practitioner warms the abdomen and works deeply into the pelvis, hips and low back. The treatment can be a bit uncomfortable for the client, but as the practitioner works more, discomfort generally disappears.

Women typically tell us they feel they've done a full abdominal workout after the first Mercier Therapy session. The first session provides tangible results, such as a sensation to empty the bladder more efficiently and reduction in low-back pain.

## Training

Mercier Therapy now offers a 20-hour course in which massage therapists and other licensed professionals such as chiropractors, physical therapists, midwives, physicians, naprapaths, naturopaths, doulas and nurses gain knowledge of women's health in a traditional sense as well as from a medical perspective. There are 50 certified Mercier Therapists in the U.S., one in Canada and one in Australia.

When writing the curriculum for the Mercier Therapy Professional Training course, I wanted to convey the importance of therapists' ability to have intelligent conversations with medical professionals in order to explain their work and understand medical lingo. It is so important we have conversations and use terminology relevant to our work in women's health.

Although I chose to not attend medical school, I'm happy to say I love what I do now. I practice holism. Life leads you to the exact place where and when you are needed. I feel so blessed with my past personal and professional experiences, which have deepened my passion for my work. There's nothing greater than hearing of a pregnancy from a woman who struggled so long to conceive.

Jennifer Mercier, N.D., Ph.D., L.M.T., has practiced women's holistic health care since 1999 ([www.merciertherapy.com](http://www.merciertherapy.com)). She is also trained as a midwife, manual therapist and bioidentical hormone specialist. She is a National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage & Bodywork-approved provider. The documentary film, *Fertility: The Shared Journey with Mercier Therapy*, will be released this year.