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# Compendium Edition: Clinical Application of Counterstrain

By Harmon L. Myers D.O.



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Counterstrain is a powerful tool to treat chronic and acute pain. Its gentle but logical manipulations can affect immediate, often lasting relief, and help maximize the body's natural inclination toward health. Actual case histories and standardized muscle-specific treatment positions bring the author's expertise to beginners and advanced practitioners alike.

In this unique at-a-glance presentation, doctor, author, lecturer, teacher, and nationally recognized master of Counterstrain, Harmon L. Myers, D.O., shares a lifetime of insight and a step-by-step approach for clinicians of all disciplines to quickly and effectively diagnose and treat much of what ails us. Indispensable for preventive care and the whole person approach to wellness.

The *Compendium Edition: Clinical Application of Counterstrain* is a comprehensive resource for students, teachers, clinicians and practitioners in osteopathic manipulation, physical therapy, and integrated medical disciplines.

For more information, visit the Tucson Osteopathic Medical Foundation [tomf.org](http://tomf.org).



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## **Editorial Review**

### **Review**

This work should find its way into the library of practitioners of multiple professions but particularly those in the osteopathic profession, as a major addition to the application of the osteopathic philosophy and principles in patient care.

The osteopathic profession has a long history of pioneers who have added to the profession, particularly in the area of the art and science of Osteopathic Manipulative Treatment. William G. Sutherland, D.O. added the dimension of manipulative treatment to the skull as well as the rest of the body. Frank Chapman, D.O. developed a system of diagnosis by tender points on the front and back of the body that were associated with systemic symptoms and disease. Fred L. Mitchell, Sr., D.O. brought forth the application of a muscle activating force throughout the body and added a major understanding of the biomechanics of the pelvis. Lawrence Jones, D.O. developed the system of Counterstrain based upon a variety of patient positioning to relieve tender points associated with a variety of patient presentations.

This author, Harmon Myers, D.O., is added to that brief list of osteopathic pioneers by presenting a well written and illustrated compendium entitled *Clinical Application of Counterstrain*. His work combines the classic Counterstrain system with the seminal work of Janet Travell, M.D. and David Simons, M.D. Myofascial Trigger Points and Chapman's reflexes in a clinical model that is easy to study and apply to a myriad of clinical presentations. While of particular value in problems primarily in the musculoskeletal system, this work also provides the practitioner a valuable diagnostic and therapeutic tool for primary care patients as well as those with complex chronic conditions. --Philip E. Greenman, D.O., F.A.A.O.

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It is a great pleasure to introduce readers to this informative book on Counterstrain, an important component of Osteopathic Manipulative Treatment (OMT). Harmon L. Myers, D.O., is a foremost practitioner and teacher of Counterstrain, which I have found to be extremely effective for relief of myofascial pain patterns and other musculoskeletal problems. Surprisingly, it also appears to work for such common conditions as irritable bowel syndrome and gastro-esophageal reflux disease. Since 1997, Dr. Myers has been associated with the University of Arizona's Program in Integrative Medicine, which I founded and continue to direct. In that capacity, he has seen many patients in our Integrative Medicine Clinic, has been a key participant in our patient care conferences, and has taught OMT and Counterstrain to our residential and associate fellows and visiting medical residents and students. He is one of the most popular and valued members of the Program's clinic faculty. Dr. Myers tells me that this book is inspired by the very positive responses he has received from the Integrative Medicine fellows he has taught over the past few years. Counterstrain is a patient-friendly technique, much less intimidating than the high-velocity manipulation favored by chiropractors. It is also fast-acting, often relieving pain within minutes. Harmon Myers learned it directly from Larry Jones, D.O., the developer of the Strain/Counterstrain method of diagnosing and treating musculoskeletal problems. Dr. Myers became expert in its application. I have watched him produce rapid, dramatic cures of long-standing complaints in our clinic, often to the amazement of both patients and fellows. The conditions for which Counterstrain is effective are very common. The potential of the technique to cause harm is minimal, and its cost-effectiveness is high. In other words, it has everything to recommend it for inclusion in integrative medical settings. The only limitation on doing so is lack of trained practitioners. Of course, there is no substitute for training with a skilled mentor. Just as Dr. Myers learned Counterstrain from its inventor,

he has been able to transmit the technique to generations of students. Now, by writing down the specifics of diagnosis of myofascial pain patterns and their treatment using Counterstrain, he has made his expertise available to many more. I hope that this book will inspire many physicians to learn this useful method. At least, more of them should know that it exists and should think of referring patients to it before recommending more drastic interventions that often do not produce good outcomes. --Andrew Weil, M.D.

Dr. Myers Clinical Application of Counterstrain has revolutionized the way I practice and teach medicine. I use Myers Counterstrain diagnostic and treatment approaches not just for muscular pain, but also for abdominal complaints, headaches, tinnitus and dizziness. As a conventionally-trained internal medicine MD physician, I would never have guessed that in my clinical practice today I would routinely check for tension and tenderness in muscles of the neck in order to discover a possible treatment for a patient's migraine headaches. Or that I would work to ameliorate abdominal pain in a patient with Crohn's by using counterstrain techniques on the abdominal and back muscles. As a risk-averse internist, I welcome the addition of this gentle, almost entirely benign therapeutic tool in my repertoire. In problem-oriented visits, the immediate and often permanent relief offered by this technique continually reinforces the power of this method of manipulation. The effects of Counterstrain on acute and long-lasting ailments often astonishes my patients, students, residents, and even the seasoned practicing physician. Prior to the publication of Dr. Myers Clinical Application of Counterstrain, in order to learn and practice Counterstrain, I often needed to have a Janet Travell's two volumes of Myofascial Pain and Dysfunction and Jones Strain-Counterstrain, along with notes from Myers Counterstrain courses splayed across the tables in the room as I referenced one text after the other while the patient watched apprehensively. I flipped through loose-leaf pages of Myers lectures that logically connected Travell's possible referral muscles with Jones sometimes seemingly-unrelated therapeutic positioning, hoping to find the right muscle and the correct treatment. The availability of Myers Clinical Application of Counterstrain, with its clinically-relevant and easy-to-use synthesis of Travell's muscular referral patterns with Jones therapeutic position has been a true gift to the field of manipulative medicine. Tentative new students through experienced practicing physicians will find Myers compilation to be very helpful from expediting acquisition of knowledge to functioning as an inclusive and intuitive reference text. Clinical Application of Counterstrain is well organized, and comes replete with user-friendly pictures of the myofascial referral points, in addition to illustrations of the anatomy of the relevant muscles, and photos demonstrating the correct positioning for relief of trigger points. Myers text with clinical pearls and insights from several decades of practicing and teaching Counterstrain are invaluable for those learning and practicing Counterstrain. I wish this book had been published when I first studying Counterstrain; not only would learning have been more visual and intuitive, but the increased efficiency might have meant less apprehensive patients on whom I practiced with the fluttering papers and flipping pages of the various different references. After almost 10 years of studying, teaching and practicing Counterstrain, I find that I still gratefully refer to Myers intuitive book for help with different cases. --Julia Jernberg, MD

#### About the Author

Dr. Harmon Myers is a national authority and teacher of the Counterstrain method of osteopathic manipulative treatment (OMT). He has been teaching courses for 20 years in Strain/Counterstrain manipulation and since 1997 has been a preceptor for the Program in Integrative Medicine at the University of Arizona. Dr. Myers received his degree in osteopathy from Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine in 1954. He is board certified in general practice and osteopathic manipulative medicine.

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