

BIOLOGICAL FABRIC THAT HOLDS US TOGETHER

Fascia is a structure of connective tissue that lies beneath the skin to attach, stabilise and separate muscles, blood vessels and other internal organs. **Karin Locher** details this 'Cinderella' tissue that is changing our minds about our body

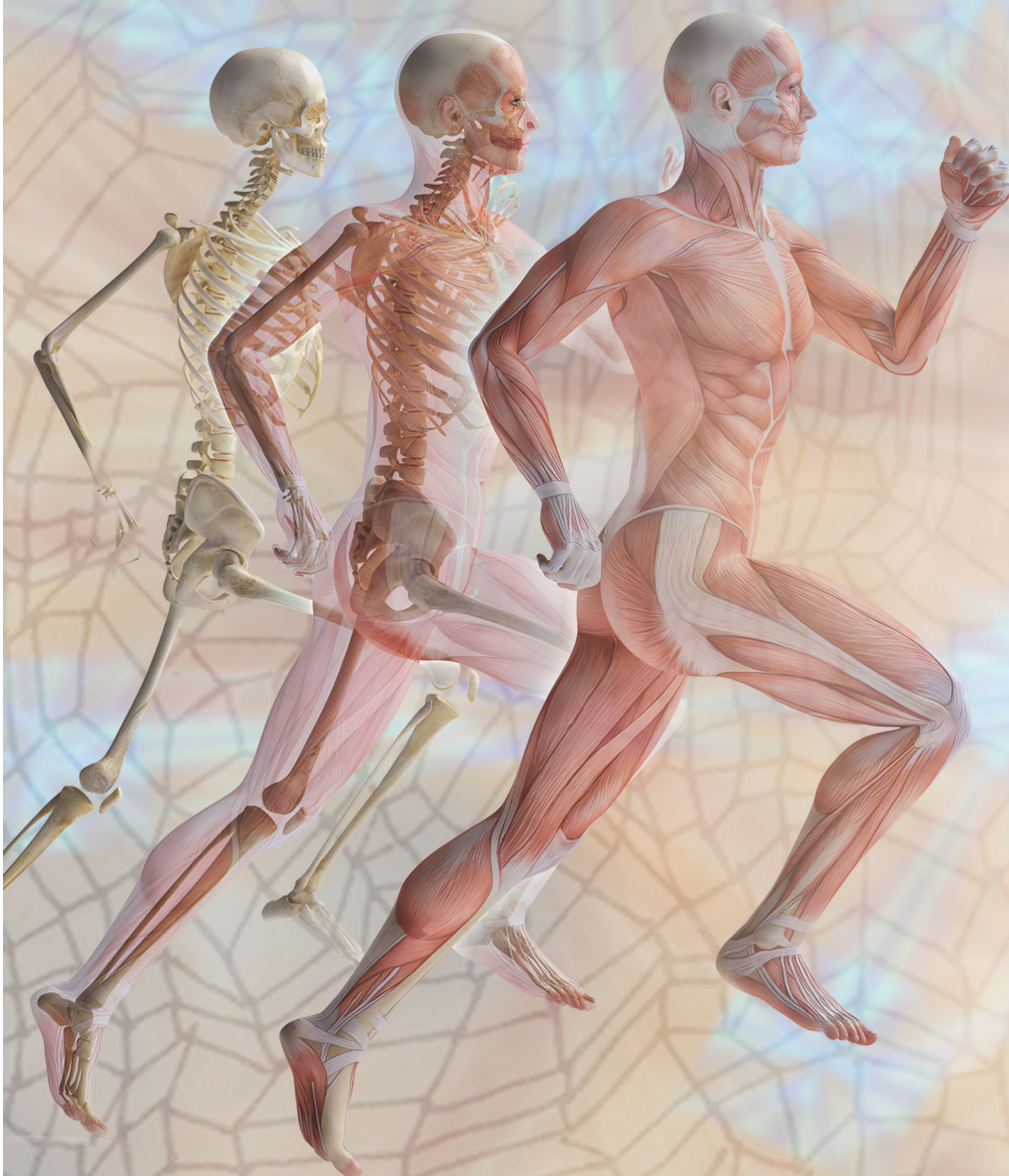
“I’ve got you under my skin,” sang Frank Sinatra. And perhaps many a researcher whistles this song, since a very special web of tissues takes care of our heartbeat: The fascia web.

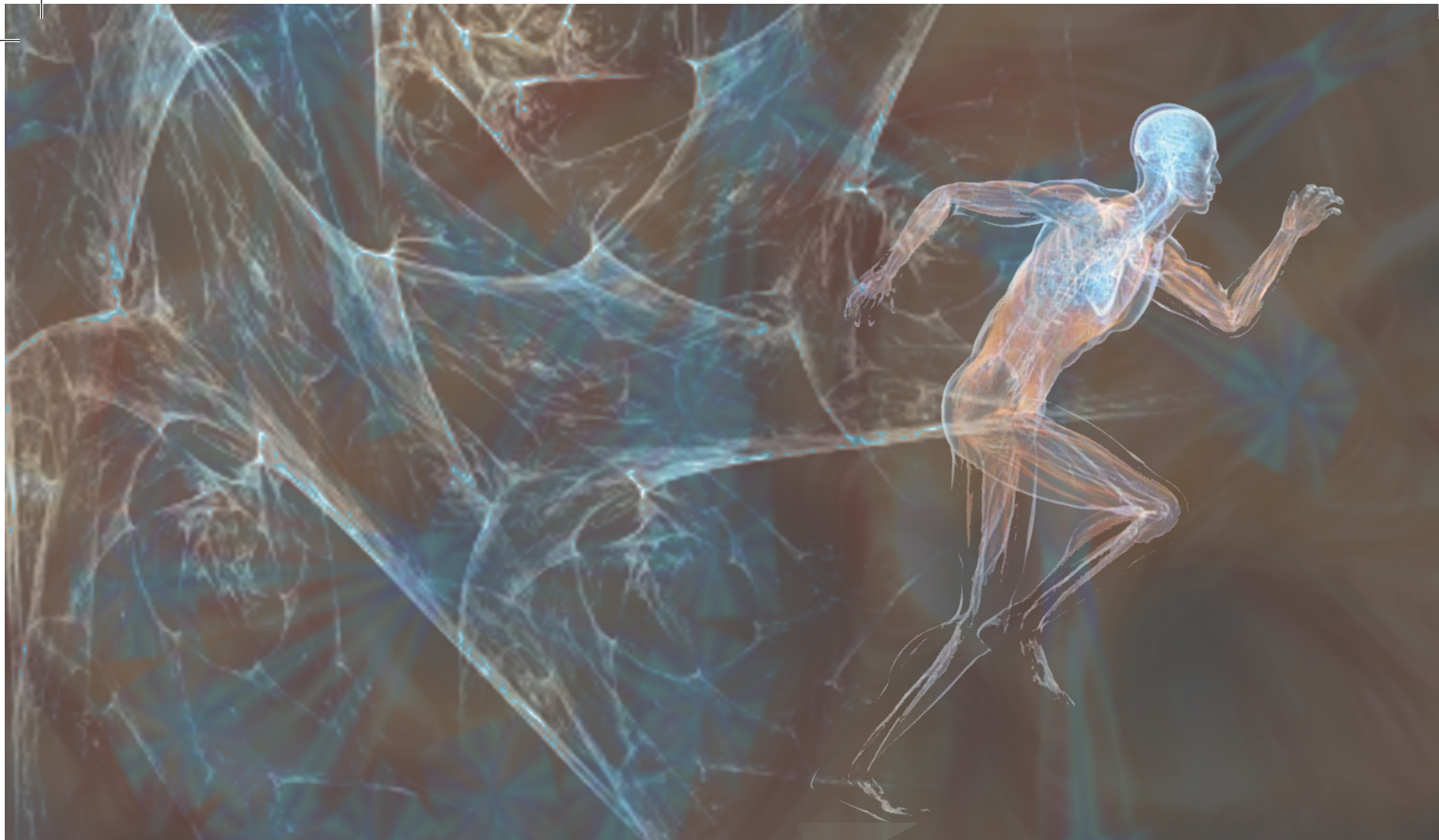
Fascia is the biological fabric that holds our bodies together. It is a three-dimensional web of fibrous proteins that holds our 70 trillion living cells in their organised placement, but like Cinderella, fascia has long been ignored. Looking at anatomical diagrams and pictures, one sees bones and muscles yet no sign of fascia tissues. Thanks to modern research methods we can now catch on to this branched out web, which is stepping into the limelight.

Fitted out with blood vessels and nerves, and filled with a liquid which gives it hydraulic capacity, fascia is coming to be recognised as the most important sense organ for our body awareness. It is a central part in recovery from injury, critical in high performance and crucial in our potential for movement in every day life.

Understanding fascia is essential to the interplay of stability and flexibility, and movement. Fascia is the means by which the body stabilises; without stability there can be no flexibility, and without flexibility we die.

We are now on the brink of a game-changing shift in our understanding of human anatomy in which fascia plays a starring role. »





Fitted out with blood vessels and nerves, and filled with a liquid which gives it hydraulic capacity, fascia is coming to be recognised as the most important sense organ for our body awareness

This system brings to life implications from strain, pain, stress, emotions, our everyday actions and even our thoughts. Single muscle theory is something of a has-been... Connective tissue (fascia) phenomena is a new anatomy that is making a lot more sense to anatomists, movement experts, medical professionals and practitioners.

The implications of this Cinderella web are profound. Problems such as skeletal imbalances, inexplicable chronic pain, and the many syndromes of the 21st century are now being addressed through the 're-attuning' of the neuro-myo-fascial pathways, allowing the body to correct and heal itself. Isn't it, therefore, high time that we pay more attention to what is happening directly under our skin?

Fascia is the bio-mechanical regulatory system, supporting and giving form to the body; it enables the functioning of the muscles and abets the immune system and psyche.

"We don't actually work the muscle," says Tom Myers author of *Anatomy Trains*. "The mind doesn't think of it as training the deltoids or biceps, it thinks

in terms of motions, of individual neuro-motor units, of which there might be a hundred in the biceps. Each of these neuro-motor units is wrapped by fascia, called the fascicles." Fascia is therefore essential to the activity of the muscle.

Fascia is nothing new we all experience it everyday but are mostly just not aware. When we move, stretch or hold a pose, it is the fascia that is responding and adapting to the form. It 'gives out' for our flexibility and 'holds in' for our stability. This dynamic dance plays out through every twist and turn we make. When we experience restrictions within the balance of this dance it is often our held emotions within this tissue matrix that is limiting its play out.

Movement and the restriction of movement can reveal underlying emotions and can in itself release them.

Likewise when we can let go of an emotion or thought pattern we can free the restriction within the tissues. Therefore, your movement patterns are influenced by your thoughts and emotional patterns.

CREATING CHANGE

The starting point for working with this complex body-wide system is understanding how it responds. Our fascial system is constantly adapting and responding to its environments. It is adapting to every action and movement you make, to every reaction you have, and to every thought and emotion. When we can become more aware of our actions, we can consciously choose for it to respond in a desired and specific way, which will, in turn, change the outcome. We can and are, therefore, determining our own state.

We are in effect responsible for creating the conditions and symptoms that we live with every day, and the good news is, that we, therefore, are the ones to re-solve them.

There are many things that can be done to promote general fascial well-being, and movement is essential to its lifelong state. Fascia is 68% water and is hydrated only through movement, twisting and stretching.

Fascia becomes more fibrotic as we age. In old age, although we can still strengthen our muscles, the network will no longer respond well. So, when we ask how we can ease the stiffness that happens with ageing, we must think not only bio-chemically but more importantly bio-mechanically.

*Fascia is 68% water
and is hydrated
only through
movement, twisting
and stretching.
It becomes more
fibrotic as we age*

MIND-BODY TRANSFORMATION

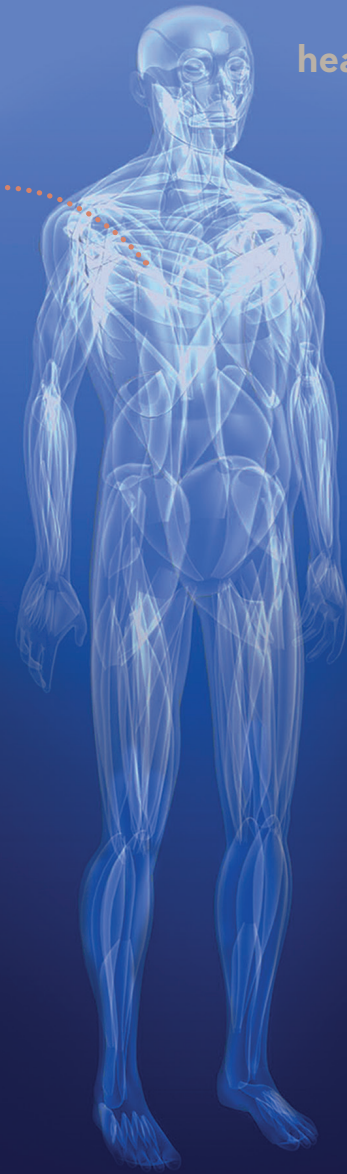
Science today is only just catching up to the ancient wisdom of the mind-body connection and the effect that mental patterns (e.g. stress) can have on the body through bio-chemical pathways.

When stress builds up in the brain, it only has two ways out – one is the chemistry of the body (mood changes), the other way that distress manifests itself is in patterns of tension. The trouble with those patterns arises when they become lodged permanently as chronic tension patterns. Patterns that move are just fine. We get angry. We get un-angry. We get sad. We get un-sad. The trouble is with the things that come along and stay for a long time, like the unresolved anger or the unresolved grief.

With those, the brain keeps sending out the same messages to the same tissues, which starts to 'posture' you. And after a while, your mind has become that pattern, your muscles have fitted into that pattern, your fascia has formed into that pattern, your distribution of energy has adjusted into that pattern, and that in itself causes illness or lack of ability to move.

It is our trainers, massage therapists, yoga teachers and movement professionals who are all on the front lines of healthcare today; people are turning to them for health recovery and long term goals. It is these professionals that need to educate the people in the essential role they play in their own health, and help them to be involved in their outcome. It is these professionals, therefore, who need to update their education in order to stay ahead of the game. ✨

heal



NEUROFASCIA BRIDGE

Karin Locher, a pioneer in the fascia movement, is the founder of Spatial Medicine and CPM Education. It offers worldwide Continuing Education workshops and trainings to movement and body minded professionals, to recognise, understand and experience this essential body ingredient and how they can work with it professionally and personally. Her signature Fascia Bridge Programme offered around the world will be available in Dubai on March 4-5 and March 11-12 with Phoenix Rising www.phoenix-rising.me. For details go to: www.contrology-pilates-method.com/courses_list.asp

