

Rehabilitation of the spine

Rehabilitation of the Spine – A Practitioners Manual – Second Edition
 By Craig Liebenson
 Publisher: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins
 Guide price £54

A book review by John Lange DC MSc FCC

IT IS hard to believe that ten years have passed since Craig Liebenson burst onto the European manual therapy scene with his benchmark book *Rehabilitation of the Spine – A Practitioner's Manual (First Edition)*. In the ten years that have followed, many of us have been influenced by Dr Liebenson's work through his book, lectures and publications.

He is back. *The Second Edition* published by Lippincott Williams and Wilkins is bigger and even better. It is now accompanied by an excellent workshop companion DVD.

The foreword is of course by Professor Gordon Waddell (who seems in recent years to be cooling slightly from a biopsychosocial universe). The line up of contributors to the book is truly amazing. It witnesses a galaxy of academic stars whose contributions make the cost of the book seem very good value indeed. It is also good to see contributions from some of our own home grown colleagues based here in the UK.

The text is separated into seven parts, each with their own chapters. These seven parts are: Overview, Basic Science, Assessment, Acute Care Management (first four weeks), Recovery Care Management (after four weeks), Practical Applications by Region and Implementing the Functional Paradigm. All flow well and help with quick reference or

more detailed study.

The opening chapters may be a little 'heavy' for the thoroughbred 'hands on' clinician but they are actually packed with a lot of interesting and relevant material. The theme of the biopsychosocial-based introductory Overview chapters ends quite abruptly at the interface with Basic Science. This first Science chapter titled 'Lumbar Spine Stability' is presented by Professor Stuart McGill who is not shy in expressing his lack of interest in biopsychosocial concepts.

A further plethora of well known heavyweight names from the research and clinical worlds takes us through the sources and assessment of spinal pain. It is pleasing to see that many of the authors remain mindful of the fact that clinical management involves both the art and science of healthcare. Although the book is naturally biased towards evidence-based care there is not the impression of excessive controls.

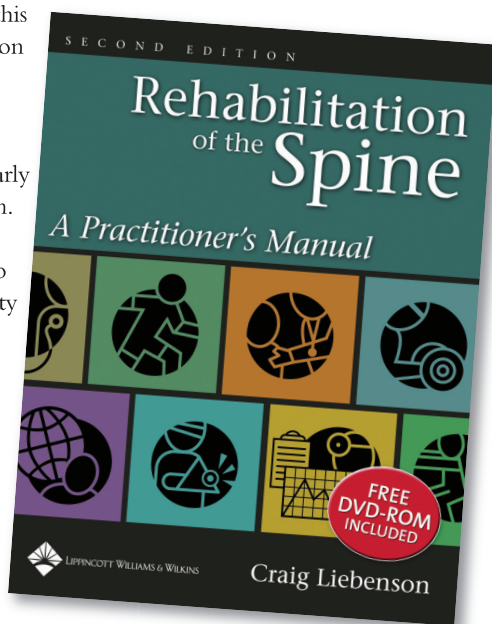
The Management section is vast, comprising some five hundred pages. Many of these pages are taken up with excellent illustrations. No stone seems to be left unturned. Exercise Methods, Soft Tissue Manipulation, End Range Loading Techniques, Posture Control, Yoga Based Training for Spinal Stability, Nutritional Considerations, Neuro Mobilisation and Proprioceptive Taping just give a flavour of some of the fascinating and well presented topics. Unlike in the First Edition, manipulation is covered more than adequately by the 'effervescent' George de Franca. The underlying

theme through this global presentation of management is to prevent chronicity by implementing early patient activation. The report of findings seems to be an opportunity to educate the patient towards self-centred care and avoid dependency on the therapist.

The book clearly shows the importance of manipulation but also that its sole use in pain relief and functional restoration is not without controversy. Throughout the book an integrated approach for the conservative care of patients is deemed the way forward and it is emphasised that all passive modalities should be offered in a time-limited manner as adjuncts to the patient's self management.

A small failing of the First Edition (in my opinion) was the quality of illustration and the written description of many of the techniques. This has certainly been addressed in the Second Edition. The illustrations and text are much clearer and the DVD coverage of the major evaluation, sparing and stabilisation strategies is extremely helpful.

The final sections loosely wrap things up under the broad titles of 'Practical Application by Region' and 'Implementing the Functional Paradigm'. Again some wonderful and practical pieces are presented but I cannot help feeling that a small opportunity has been missed. In the last ten years many more of us now accept



Dr Liebenson's views as a standard for good back care but are we actually implementing them? How do we implement them? Chiropractic fits well into a biomedical model. Finding and correcting impairments using palpation and manipulation is quick and we find it easy. Rehabilitation appears time consuming. So how do we actually change our practices to implement a patient-centred re-activation approach focused on the patient's dysfunction and distress, rather than addressing possible coincidental structural pathology or the patient's objective symptoms?

In summary this is an excellent book and DVD. The book certainly covers rehabilitation but also much, much more. Dr Liebenson describes it as a 'Practitioner's Manual' and the new format does facilitate quick and easy reference. However, it is now more than a manual. It is a guide to the current and most significant spinal management and rehabilitation information. Definitely a five star must-buy book! □