

Professional Background and Experience of Bowen-Therapists with Bowen-Therapy – a Quantitative Approach

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Introduction

- Bowen Therapy is a minimalistic manual myofascial therapy, named after Australian therapist Tom Bowen (1912-1982). Bowen's techniques have been taught internationally for around 20 years. To March 2012 the most prominent schools in Germany (ISBT, BowTech) had educated approximately 1,000 Bowen-Therapists in that country.
- The method usually consists of small 'moves' – a rolling movement of the therapist's thumbs or fingers, usually cross-fibre, over muscles and/or tendons. Targeted regions of the body are often gently manipulated in specific sequences. Between the sequences there is often a waiting period, usually of two to three minutes.



- There is little scientific research up to now (Pilot Studies by Dicker, Carter, Marr) but with encouraging results for frozen shoulder, stress-related symptoms and reduction of tension in hamstrings.
- Little is formally known about Bowen-Therapists, the treated conditions in general, the capacity of Bowen Therapy or its physiological impacts.
- This basic research has been conducted with a pilot study aimed at questioning Bowen Therapists in Germany.

Method

- A standardized questionnaire was developed consisting of 11 questions about Bowen-Therapists - their core professions and their experience with Bowen - and nine questions about clients, their conditions and treatments.
- The questionnaire was distributed to 99 participants at the ISBT-Bowen Therapy congress near Munich in October 2007. At the end of February 2008, 24 questionnaires had been returned (24%).

Therapists were asked to complete one sheet for themselves and five sheets for the last five completed Bowen-treatments.

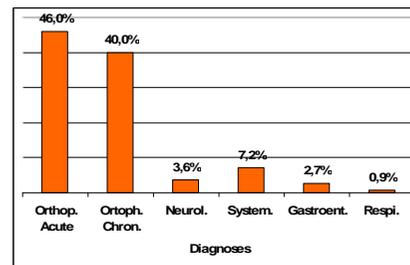
- Data for 24 therapists and 113 clients was gained. Metric and nominal data were collected.
- Data was analyzed per SPSS.

Results: Therapists

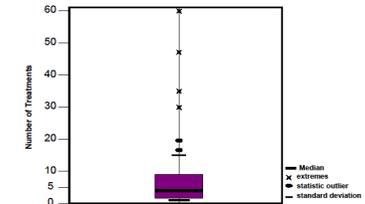
- The core training of the therapists were in naturopathy (62%), massage-therapy (21%) and physiotherapy (12%) with 4% other health professions (e.g.medical doctors, nurses), most of them working in their own clinics (67%).
- Their average experience with Bowen was three years (ranging from six months to eight years). Additional training covered other manual therapies (84%), TCM (8.3%) and homeopathy (4.2%).
- They found Bowen Therapy applicable for each patient. 81% found it much more effective or more effective than other therapies.
- Unique features of Bowen Therapy are the immediate *(42%),and long lasting effects (38%). Its economy of use (minimal input) was important for 29% of therapists and for 12.5% the waiting period was noted as important.
- 8% identified the safety for patients and the self-empowerment patients can gain as important factors.
- Some compare it to Homeopathy or "Regulationsmedizin"

Results: Patients

- The Age of patients varied between two months and 90 years.
- Most treated diagnoses were of orthopaedic-neurological origin,



- 64% were acute cases, others related to chronic conditions.
- 45% of the patients needed 1 to 3 treatments, 28% needed 4 -6 treatments. -



- The treatments were successful in 87% of cases, with complete freedom of symptoms or significant improvement, and 0.9% presented with a negative response.
- A total of 34% of clients had no side-effect, 32% felt a transient increase of pain and 33% felt different vegetative reactions.

Conclusion and Prospects

- This pilot study gives first formal insight into Bowen Therapy and the service of Bowen Therapists in Germany. Experienced therapists inform about its qualities, features and possibilities.
- The findings suggest that Bowen Therapy is a safe, effective and economic treatment with fast, long lasting effects.
- The study can be used as baseline for more differentiated research with bigger samples and to specific diagnoses, especially of neuro-muscular origin.
- It also addresses questions about the German Health System and its health-professionals.
- It contributes information to the sparse scientific literature about Bowen Therapy in Germany and worldwide.

Further questions e.g., what are the essential components of Bowen-Therapy, will be answered by a second study with a qualitative design.

This-study has been conducted under the guidance of BSPH at Charité Berlin