



Satisfied customers ... from left, Peter Smith, Keith Williams and Judy Hilzinger with Bowen Therapist Robert McCusker. Ms Hilzinger calls Robert a "magician" after he successfully helped her son Ryan with a chronic knee problem.

Locals find relief with Bowen Therapy

LIKE many Australian inventions before it, Bowen Therapy has had to prove itself overseas. It is a type of non-invasive health care treatment that helps patients' own bodies heal themselves.

Developed in Australia, Bowen Therapy is now being used successfully all around the world.

By releasing the tension in muscles, Bowen Therapy improves blood flow into muscles. The blood flow then improves and speeds up the healing process.

The tension is removed by applying a series of gentle movements with the practitioner's fingers. Once the tension is released, muscles, bones and organs return to their correct positions.

Circulation and organ function improve which has a beneficial impact on the healing process. Bowen Therapy can be used in conjunction with medications and herbs.

The Snowy Monaro Business Enterprise Centre has been assisting Robert McCusker, a Bowen Therapist, set up his own practice in Cooma - and he has had quite an impact on the community already.

Cooma resident Mrs Robin Kelly had suffered from chronic back pain for 37 years due to a swollen disc.

"After my first Bowen treatment from Robert I stopped having to take pain killers; it's wonderful to be free of pain and Bowen Therapy has even helped my arthritis."

Local bowler Kevin Jackson saw Robert about a hernia ... "Eight days after my first Bowen treatment with Robert I was out raking the lawn and vacuuming the floor. It's been nearly two years since I have been able to do things like this."

Bowen Therapy has been used to assist young people with a variety of problems. Kylie Paske had asked Robert if Bowen Therapy could do anything about her acute acne problem.

"Two days after the first treatment, close friends and family were asking why my complexion looked so good. Robert also used Bowen Therapy to fix my shoulder," she said.

Local businessman Ross McKay has also been treated by Robert McCusker. "The stress of running three cinemas was starting to catch up. I felt tired through the day, but couldn't sleep at night.

"After some Bowen Therapy from Robert, I started sleeping properly at night, my posture has improved and I have a spring back in my step."

Robert McCusker is working from the "Back to Earth" Natural Health Clinic in Massie Street, Cooma and can be contacted on telephone 6452 5544. Each Bowen Therapy treatment may take up to an hour.

Exchange

Q I was impressed with the website www.bowen.asn.au and I wanted to know if anyone could recommend a good Bowen therapist in Sydney.

Jessica Moore, Drummoyne

I can highly recommend a Bowen practitioner. Robert McCusker of the Balmain Bowen Centre, 9555 2117, performed Bowen on my young son who had suffered acute and chronic asthma and had pneumonia twice in six months. Despite my scepticism at the time, having taken my son to numerous specialists and hospitals to little or no avail, I now am very happy to declare that Robert cured Rory of his asthma.

Sandra J. Betts, Balmain

I have suffered terrible muscular pain for a number of years and have tried everything — acupuncture, massage, chiropractic — but all only provided short-term relief. On holidays in Ireland and suffering a great deal of

pain, I came across Bowen's therapy. That one initial treatment saw me pain-free for almost six months. It took me some time to find a good Bowen's therapist in Sydney and then I visited Rob McCusker at the Balmain Bowen Centre, 99A Victoria Rd, Rozelle 2039, phone number as above. He is one I can definitely recommend.

Vicki Law, Ryde

I can highly recommend Farida Irani, 80 Coonara Ave, West Pennant Hills, phone 9894 8979. I personally have gained tremendous relief under her treatment.

Joe Martin, North Rocks

Exchange also thanks Linda Bradley of Bathurst.

□ Is there a question to which you've always wanted to know the answer? Or can you answer a question? Send questions or answers to Exchange, Letters Editor, PO Box 2808, GPO Sydney NSW 2001 or e-mail letters@dailytelegraph.com.au. A selection will be published but we are not able to enter into individual correspondence.

Releasing a body of work

An alternative remedial therapy developed in Australia helps the body to heal itself in the most gentle of ways.

KATE MINOGUE reports.

Bowen therapists believe the human body knows more about fixing itself than any practitioner ever will.

By gently moving muscles they allow the body's own healing resources to go to work and provide relief from health problems ranging from sporting injuries to asthma.

Tom Bowen created the therapy in Geelong, Victoria, in the 1960s while he was working as a masseur for football clubs.

In 1975 a government survey into natural therapies found he was treating 13,000 patients a year with his new technique.

Bowen taught only six people the therapy before he died in 1982.

The technique, while still relatively unknown, has now spread to Britain, the US, Canada, New Zealand and Europe.

It is now recognised by many health funds.

The Bowen Therapists Federation of Australia has about 2000 members and there are many other independent practitioners.

Treasurer of the Federation Sharon Hopkins says "everyone can benefit from Bowen" including young children right through to the elderly.

The treatments comprise of sequences of small gentle moves with the therapist's thumb over the muscle at a specific site on the body.

The Federation's website, at www.bowen.asn.au/ says the therapy produces an integrated body response.

It consequently improves circulation; lymphatic and venous draining; assimilation of nutrients and elimination of toxins; joint mobility; posture; clearance of dysfunctional debris; normalisation of cellular physiology and tissue integrity.

It is used to help with a range of health problems including sports and accident injuries; stress disorders; back pain; respiratory, digestive and hormonal trouble and chronic fatigue.

Bowen therapist Robert McCusker describes the technique as: "If you walk into a cold



Relief ... Robert McCusker and client

picture: MARCO DEL GRANDE

and dark house, if you flick the switches you can get the heating and lights on. Bowen is like flicking the switches on.

"One man had a stroke, his arm and face were numb and he had no movement. He had been doing six months of physiotherapy and he had limited movements," he says.

"By the end of his first Bowen treatment he got feeling in the top six inches (15cm) of his arm and he could move his fingers.

"By the end of the sixth treatment he had feeling in all his fingers, control of his arm and his face and he no longer dribbled." McCusker says Bowen therapists are like body technicians.

"Everyone else is trying to fix

the patient's body, but we believe that the body knows more about fixing itself than any practitioner ever will."

McCusker says treatments involve a full back and neck-relaxation treatment.

"It improves the posture, this has a big effect on the body. All the organs tend to work better.

"There's no cracking like with a chiropractor," he says.

"It's like a meditation during the treatment.

"It frees you up, you feel lighter and freer, everything moves easier."

□ For more information go to www.bowen.asn.au/ or www.thebowentechnique.com/ or www.usbowen.com/

Can the mysterious Bowen therapy cure a sore back, asks Bronwen Gora.

An aching back caused by overdoing it at the gym seemed the perfect excuse to book in for Bowen therapy. What therapy, you ask? Indeed, knowledge of the Australian muscle healing technique mostly travels by word of mouth.

I did know this massage technique was meant to have amazing healing affects. So I sought out Robert McCusker, who practices in Sydney's Rozelle.

Bowen therapy was developed in the 1950s by Tom Bowen in the Victorian town of Geelong after he found that it only took tiny, gentle movements of the soft tissue around muscles to produce a healing affect.

Much of his technique came from watching trainers treat injured football players at his local club. Bowen's treatments eventually became so popular in Geelong that people queued to see him – and his methods have now spread to the US and Europe.

After chatting with McCusker about the claims made about Bowen therapy – including a story about a man who had used a golf cart for years due to a dodgy knee who was able to walk 18 holes after a treatment – he checks out my body's alignment. Apparently my right shoulder is a few millimetres higher than the other and my pelvis slightly twisted. My wonky pelvis is causing all my shoulder and neck tension because of the strain it's putting on the muscles.

I lie down. Unlike most massages, Bowen is performed through your clothes... something tells me this isn't going to be a fancy, spa-like experience.

McCusker starts the basic relaxation treatment and the movements are so minimal it's hard to believe they're doing anything. He rolls soft tissue over muscle on my back, shoulder blades, spine, neck and glutes. This is the crucial movement

that restores blood flow, oxygen and nutrients to your muscles as well as improving lymphatic drainage – the secrets behind the technique's effectiveness.

not so soft touch

This is not like a normal massage. Your therapist will pop into the room, gently roll a few muscles and then leave you alone for three to five minutes at a time. This goes on for just over half an hour to an hour. Strangely though, the treatment makes me extremely relaxed and sends me into a meditative state.

"This is because we're increasing the blood flow through the muscles without stimulating the nervous system," McCusker later explains. But ever the sceptic, I'm still wondering whether the effects of this treatment will be merely psychosomatic.

McCusker insists that, as well as improving blood flow to muscles, Bowen therapy is also allowing the muscles to return to their correct lengths. "This pulls the skeleton back into place, allowing the joints to realign," he says. "Bowen has a major calming affect on the nervous system, almost like meditation, and when that happens the body goes into repair mode. The whole immune system perks up."

After the session, McCusker asks me to stand up by bending over with the weight evenly on both feet, then rolling my back up slowly. This promotes good posture – one of the major aims of Bowen therapy. Once I'm upright, as McCusker predicted,

I do feel straighter and taller. While the back pain hasn't disappeared, it's faded a little. McCusker asks me to walk across his waiting room three times and checks my alignment: my shoulders are level, and my pelvis is almost back in balance. And I find I'm holding my shoulders back without even thinking about it.

muscling in

But the most noticeable difference comes when I leave the treatment rooms. Earlier I was feeling tired, now my energy levels are high. Overdoing it after a Bowen treatment is easy as you feel so invigorated, McCusker warns. One elderly lady who could barely walk had Bowen therapy and ended up falling out of a mulberry tree a few days later after climbing up to pick berries.

I fall into the same trap. I'm feeling so good that even though I'm supposed to be giving my muscles time to heal I take my renewed energy to the gym.

As he does with all his clients, McCusker calls four days later to see how I'm feeling. Muscles, he says, take about that long to repair themselves. I do feel better, but my back is still sore. McCusker blames the workout. I book in for a second session – most people only need two or three sessions, says McCusker.

During the second session McCusker also rolls the muscles under my diaphragm as well as those on my back – a technique used to clear asthma, indigestion and shortness of breath caused by anxiety. I do find I'm breathing easier. And straight after this second treatment I also feel a lot calmer and centred, and more alert and alive.

"You're more centred because your posture's improved," says McCusker.

But is it a placebo effect? About 24 hours after the second session I notice my lower back pain has subsided. Days later I'm still full of energy. So far, I have no complaints whatsoever.

the heal deal

■ Bowen therapy can cost anywhere from \$60 to \$120 an hour. For more information contact Robert McCusker on (02) 9555 2117 and check out the website www.bowen.asn.au

pain drain

Bowen therapists claim to be able to treat...

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------|
| ■ Sore muscles | ■ Sinus problems |
| ■ Frozen shoulders | ■ Hayfever |
| ■ Sports injuries | ■ Sore throats |
| ■ Stress and depression | ■ Asthma |
| ■ Neck tension | ■ Indigestion |
| | ■ Fatigue |
| | ■ RSI |

Good Medicine

YOUR PERSONAL
LIFE

Relax ... and ease physical and emotional problems quickly and painlessly. Angela Donaldson reports

bowen therapy

THE GENTLE HEALER

Tired of those body-pounding treatments that leave you feeling as if you've done a round or two in the boxing ring? Try Bowen therapy, a blissfully gentle body workout, said to treat problems from back pain to infertility, while lulling the mind into a deeply relaxed state.

"The main reason Bowen therapy achieves great results is that it allows the body to repair itself," says Robert McCusker, from the Balmain Bowen Centre in Sydney. "The moves are gentle, and don't traumatise soft tissue like some massage."

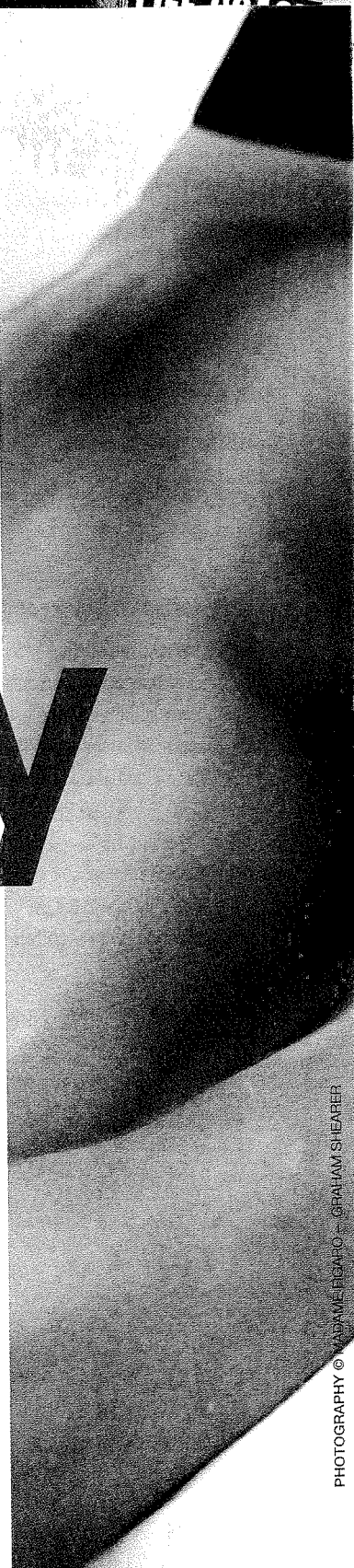
"Because it improves posture, organ function improves, which speeds up the healing time required. Bowen's calming effect on the nervous system allows the body to go straight into repair mode."



WHAT IS IT?

Bowen therapy was started in Geelong, Victoria, in the 1950s by Tom Bowen, an intuitive healer who first used the techniques on footballers. Bowen believed problems and limitations occur in our bodies because most people's muscles are permanently holding some tension, and so are in a shortened state.

The unique movements of the therapy are designed to allow the muscles to relax ►



PHOTOGRAPHY © NADIA DE BIAFO - GRAHAM SHEARER

to their natural length, which in turn allows organs and bones to return to their natural shape and position.

"When a person is bent and twisted because of tight muscles, their organs are pushed out of shape and out of place," says McCusker. "This will affect how well they work and how well they will repair themselves."

In addition, tight muscles hold the bones and joints out of alignment, causing a whole range of structural problems from painful knees to frozen shoulder.



HOW IS IT DONE?

Bowen therapy is a body treatment where the therapist makes a series of small, gentle movements in which the skin is moved back and forth over muscle.

This is followed by a waiting period – usually a few minutes – in which you are left to rest quietly.

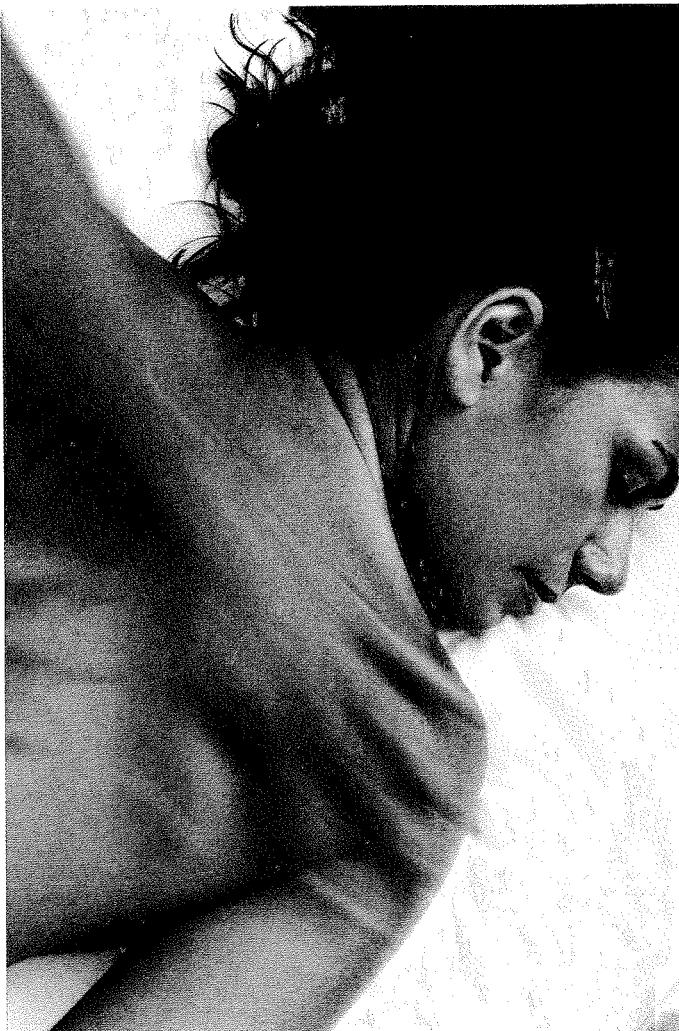
Another series of movements is made on a different set of muscles, followed by another rest period. The process is repeated several times.

Bowen therapy is usually performed while the patient is fully clothed and lying down on a padded bench or bed. This is to allow ultimate relaxation of the patient's muscles to occur.



HOW DOES IT WORK?

When muscles lengthen and allow everything to return to its place, the health of the body



naturally improves. "When internal organs go back to where they are meant to be, they function better and healing is accelerated," says McCusker.

The majority of Bowen moves are done over the area where veins and lymphatic vessels leave the muscles, and are said to push stale blood up the vein towards the heart.

Stagnant lymph fluid – the carrier of our cells' waste products – is moved out of the area, allowing fresh blood to move into the muscles and fresh lymph to enter the area.

Revitalised with energy and fresh nutrients, the muscles can then relax completely.

A key aspect of Bowen therapy is its minimalist approach. The moves used

are small, spaced apart and gentle. "This gives Bowen therapy an almost meditative quality in which the brain can go into the 'alpha' state – the ultimate state for repair and healing to occur," explains McCusker. "What we are doing is encouraging the body to heal itself."



HOW DOES IT FEEL?

Converts say Bowen therapy feels similar to the effects of meditation, and leaves them more relaxed than having a massage. "Several of my patients have said it is like a yoga class where someone else does all the work for you," says McCusker.

The actual moves last only a few moments, and are like



WHO CAN IT HELP?

Many people find Bowen therapy helpful for back problems, frozen shoulder and knee injuries. Others have had relief from migraines, sinus problems, asthma, digestive problems, hormonal problems, fatigue and bedwetting. Most of these require one to four treatments.

People have also found it helpful for treating depression, anxiety and stress.

"People become mentally relaxed, which improves their ability to deal with stress," says McCusker. "I've seen this stress reduction improve people's personal relationships and work performance."

a brief massage technique. During the resting period some people report feeling a tingling or warm sensation in the area or elsewhere in the body. Others say they feel nothing at all.

After treatments clients tend to feel freer and looser, and have improved posture.



WHAT IS THE COST?

An hour-long treatment costs between \$60 and \$120. ☪

Finding a practitioner Bowen therapists can be found in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth. To find a practitioner and for more information, visit the website of the Bowen Therapists Federation of Australia at www.bowen.asn.au

MENTALLY & PHYSICALLY

What Bowen Therapy can do For You

■ The Australian developed Bowen therapy is gentle, non-evasive and is the most holistic form of health care available.

By the end of a Bowen therapy treatment the patient is in a deep meditative state of mind and when they stand up their posture has suddenly improved. The sense of well-being is similar to having been on holidays. Most people do not realize how much stress and tension they carry and consider normal, until it has gone at the end of their first Bowen session.

One of the reasons Bowen therapy achieves the results it does is because as the persons posture improves all the internal organs can return to their correct position and shape. This allows improved organ function, which speeds up the time required for the patient's body to heal itself.

Bowen therapy achieves quick lasting results on all muscular skeletal problems including back pain,

frozen shoulder, RSI, sports injuries (no matter how old) and even the aches and pains attributed to getting older. This extremely gentle and relaxing treatment will also produce quick results for problems as diverse as migraine headaches, sinus problems, coughs and asthma, digestive problems (including Irritable Bowel Syndrome), Fibromyalgia, period pain and infertility, stress and depression.

The other main reason Bowen therapy achieves such quick results is because when the patient goes into the meditative state during the treatment, it has a major calming effect on the nervous system and the body goes into automatic repair mode.

Bowen therapy also achieves quick results on stress, depression and anxiety.

Apart from improving physical performance Bowen therapy will improve mental performance as well. This includes not being ef-

fected by stress and thinking in a clear levelheaded way. Anyone who is self-employed or career conscious will find the cost of regular Bowen therapy sessions are more than offset by the increase in profits, bonuses and promotions.

The other financial advantage of Bowen therapy is that with in three treatments the patient knows whether the treatment has worked.

Unlike other forms of health care Bowen therapy simply allows the patient's body to heal itself.

Robert M. McCusker is Sydney's busiest Bowen Therapist and started the successful



Balmain Bowen Centre in 2001. The success of this practice is due to word of mouth and the results he has achieved. Robert puts his results as a Bowen therapist down to the fact that even after 13,000 treatments, he is still learning.

Sydney innerSelf



for the body, mind & spirit