

A Tribute to the McKenzie Diploma Program...

Nine weeks of clinical practice. Months of theoretical preparation. Time, effort, energy and sacrifice... Was it really worth it? Without a doubt or even a second of hesitation... I would do it again in a heartbeat. The experience I lived this summer, met and surpassed all of my expectations.

After having sacrificed months of time and energy in order to complete the home study portion of the Diploma program, I went to Sacramento for the nine week clinical portion. I was expecting to arrive in Sacramento in order to practice the techniques that I had learned throughout the courses (Parts A through D), to integrate the knowledge gained through the assignments and to have someone available to help guide me through my choice of treatments and force progressions. Little did I know that it would turn out to be so much more.

I learned about the value of self-treatment and how to empower patients to take their health and wellness into their own hands, alongside an outstanding clinician and mentor, Michael Crooks, PT, Dip.MDT. A very interesting concept – helping patients understand how to know when they need to perform their exercises based on self-assessment of movement loss and symptom-response rather than simply ‘prescribing’ their exercises every two hours... The best way to ‘get’ your patients to be more ‘compliant’, is to try to help them understand why you are asking them to do what you are, through the positive symptomatic and mechanical changes that they see! It really is the perfect way to encourage them to help themselves – through positive outcomes, and especially when those outcomes are functional ones that are important to them.

I also learned how to apply and utilize the principles outlined by Robin McKenzie and Stephen May in the extremities textbook. Learning how to more effectively distinguish between peripheral versus spinal origins of symptoms was yet another high point of my experience. The most outstanding example was a middle-aged woman with a highly irritable ‘shoulder tendinitis’ – severe pain throughout range, limited actively and passively around eighty degrees due to pain, with all resisted tests of the shoulder being limited due to pain as well. After several repetitions of properly performed retraction and then retraction / extension (at Mike’s urging), both the patient and I were astonished to see that while she maintained the retracted / extended position, she was able to almost fully abduct her arm – painfree...

So many amazing examples of how well the McKenzie Method works when applied to both spinal and peripheral musculoskeletal problems. I am glad to have kept a learning log, at Mike’s suggestion, for the numerous learning experiences and clinical ‘jewels’ I wanted to remember...

I have only succeeded in this adventure because of the support and understanding of my husband, Pierre and children, Alessa and Alex, the support and guidance of my colleague and friend, Phil Burchell and, of course, my Diploma mentor, Michael Crooks. I offer them all great thanks and appreciation.

I highly recommend this unique experience to anyone interested in improving their clinical skills and their understanding of the McKenzie Method, because there is no doubt in my mind that I am a better clinician since having completed the Diploma program.