



Pilates. For Rehab?

improving patient care through pilates principles

Tools for fitness • Knowledge for health

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Not a Newcomer

Just about everywhere you look these days you're bound to find a mention of Pilates. Pilates. Pilates. Classes at the gym, videos at the grocery store, and mats at the bookstore. This seemingly modest and gentle monster has turned the fitness, and commercial, world on its head and doesn't appear to be letting up anytime soon. After all, why should it? Since its inception in the early 1900's, Pilates has journeyed a long way to attain its current status.

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-Brent Anderson, PT, OCS

A History

Amidst the sick, wounded and dying, Joseph Pilates worked tirelessly to aid the recovery of English soldiers during WWI. Using only bedsprings and straps, Pilates was able to design a series of exercises that the incapacitated soldiers could perform from their sickbeds. It's these same exercises, that Pilates himself later coined as **Contrology**. Today they're simply known as Pilates exercises.

then, the popularity of Pilates has grown to include celebrities, athletes, individuals, and professionals in the fitness and therapy industries.

The Integration of Pilates into Rehab

In his article, *Pushing for Pilates*, Brent D. Anderson, PT, OCS, writes, "Most physical therapists, athletic trainers, and even physicians are becoming familiar with the word, but still know little about Pilates. ... Like Feldenkrais, Aston, Alexander, and Laban, Pilates developed his own system based on observed movement, creative exercises, and theories on healthy movement. The system is yoga-based with Germanic overtones of fitness; by today's standards, it matches with rehabilitation very well."¹ One reason for this is its emphasis on the core. Pilates recognized early on the importance of a healthy spine. Daniel Wilson, in his article, *Kinder, Gentler Rehab*, notes that "Pilates develops core strength, integrating the trunk, pelvis and shoulder girdle. By emphasizing proper breathing, correct spinal alignment, and complete concentration on smooth, flowing movement, clients become acutely aware of how their body feels, where it is in space, and how to control its movement."²

To further clarify Wilson writes, "Pilates for rehab, however, can differ from Pilates the exercise. 'I think it is important to clarify Pilates for rehabilitation as not *just Pilates*,' said Brent Anderson, PT, OCS, president of Polestar Education, a Pilates-based rehabilitation, fitness and training institute headquartered in Miami, FL. 'When you're talking about Pilates for rehab, you're talking about modifying the exercises and working in the Pilates body-mind environment to be able to facilitate a positive movement experience for your client. That's the crux of why Pilates is so powerful in the field of rehab,' Anderson said.

In 1926, after being released by the British, Pilates left Germany and came to the United States. On the way, he met his future wife, Clara, and they eventually set-up their first studio in New York. With a bit of strategic positioning, the Pilates' studio was located near the dance district and Joe spent most of his time talking to dancers about his method. The strategy and persistence finally paid off when George Balanchine, of the New York City Ballet, noticed Pilates and enlisted his injured dancers to train with Joe. Since

‘If you use it correctly and are able to provide that positive movement experience, your client’s physical and emotional outcome is going to be much greater. It is more about the principles of the exercise than the actual repertoire.’”²

The Principles

According to Anderson there are six principles that therapists can follow to better integrate the benefits of Pilates into their rehab programs. “Each principle contains fundamentals of anatomy, physiology, biomechanics, motor learning, and bioenergetics. ... Pilates rehabilitation is no longer limited to just orthopedics but benefits individuals with neurological impairments, cardiopulmonary restrictions, chronic pain, women’s health needs, performance enhancement needs, arthritic impairments, and other movement dysfunctions.”¹ The six principles are:

- ✕ Breathing
- ✕ Axial elongation/core control
- ✕ Efficient organization of head, neck, and shoulder girdle
- ✕ Spine articulation
- ✕ Alignment and posture
- ✕ Movement integration

Improving Patient Outcomes through Improved Movement Patterns

With its emphasis on improving movement patterns and overall mind-body connection, Pilates works to heal the whole body rather than isolate certain groups. In her article, *Above and Beyond*, Beth van Houten attributes the following to Cindy Wood, PT, “Pilates, which trains patterns of movement as opposed to isolating individual muscle groups, can lead to fewer injuries, better coordination, and improved strength and flexibility. If you’re treating a shoulder, you’re treating the patient’s trunk at the same time. No other form of rehabilitation works that way.”³ Wood goes further stating that “Pilates reintroduces movement with nondestructive forces early in the rehabilitation process, which leads to an overall faster healing time. It can literally cut the rehabilitation time in half, from 6 months to 3, for example.”³

Pilates Resources



Pilates for Rehab: A Guidebook to Integrating Pilates in Patient Care

Pilates for Rehab takes an evidence-based approach to incorporating Pilates exercises into a rehabilitation setting. With references to experts as Diane Lee, Vladimir Janda, Paul Hodges, and Shirley Sahrman; authors/practitioners, Elizabeth Smith, PT, ATC, and Kristin Smith, BA, CFT, have combined their hands on rehab, training, lecturing and teaching experience to create a clear guidebook for incorporating Pilates into a rehab program. Case studies and resources also are included throughout. Over 250 photographs and illustrations. Softcover, spiral bound. Approximately 200 pages.

The User’s Manual for Your Body

This Pilates infused DVD by Kelly Hale, MS, OTR, breaks down detailed core exercises to ensure optimum results for people of all skill levels. *The User’s Manual for Your Body* contains a preface of foundational principles, an introductory workout and experienced workout. The DVD format allows you to start at the program of your choosing. Approximately 80 minutes.



Aeromat Premium Exercise Mat

This mat is ideal for pilates mat exercises and fitness workouts. The dual surface is ribbed on one side and smooth on the other providing an optimal workout surface. The closed-cell foam structure makes for easy cleaning. Available in two sizes: 72” x 23” x .625” and 72” x 39” x .625”.

Product Mentions

All products mentioned in this newsletter can be purchased from OPTP. Shop online at OPTP.com to see all of our Pilates accessories/resources, or talk to one of our knowledgeable customer service representatives Monday-Friday from 8AM-5PM CST. Call us today at 1-800-367-7393, and we’ll be happy to assist you with all your health and fitness needs.

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References:

- 1) Anderson, Brent, PT, OCS. “*Pushing for Pilates.*” Rehab Management, June/July 2001. www.rehabpub.com/features/672001/5.asp
- 2) Wilson, Daniel. “*Kinder, Gentler Rehab.*” Advance for Physical Therapists & PT Assistants, August 15, 2005. Vol. 16, Issue 18. P. 37.
- 3) van Houten, Beth. “*Above and Beyond.*” Rehab Management, April 2005. www.rehabpub.com/features/42005/1.asp