

Working with the Soldiers!

-by Ginny Hahn

Registered Bowenwork Practitioner
Georgetown, TX, USA

How I got there:

When my husband and I "semi-retired" from Massachusetts to Texas in 2008, I knew that I wanted to volunteer to do Bowenwork somewhere. After settling in and learning my way around our new home in Sun City (an over-55, active adult community in Central Texas), I found out that a large US military base, was within driving distance and I was really drawn to doing something to help our soldiers. Now my challenge was to "find my way in."

A few months later, I met the father of one of my young clients, who was stationed there and I asked him if he knew someone whom I could contact about volunteering. He put me in touch with the Red Cross Volunteer Coordinator, who said she would look into it. She got back to me, said that the officer in charge of the Physical Therapy department at the base hospital was interested in offering complementary therapies, and that I should give him a call. As luck would have it, this officer was just beginning to consider offering complementary therapies to the recovering troops when a massage therapist, a yoga instructor and I volunteered at the same time. His "Healing Center" had achieved critical mass!

After a lengthy clearing process (background check, health screen, immunizations, safety briefing, anti-terrorist training, HIPAA training, volunteer orientation, and parking pass) I was accepted as a volunteer and could to start in February, 2009.

What I found:

The Physical Therapy department provides services for active duty soldiers, both those injured in training and those recovering from combat injuries. After providing an in-service briefing to the 6 therapists (none of whom had ever heard of Bowen Therapy), demonstrating the BRM procedures and encouraging them to refer to me those soldiers who had basically reached an end state with their physical therapy, they agreed to do so. They shared with me that they felt they had a lot of patients who were still in pain and discomfort after physical therapy and they had been looking for more that they could offer to help them on the road to recovery.

We agreed that I would come in every Wednesday and that I could use one of their treatment tables located in a quiet corner. I would start with a schedule for 6 clients, spaced an hour and 15 minutes apart. If I didn't have a full schedule, I could work on the therapists who had time available. What's really convenient about working in such an environment is:

1. I can count on seeing the soldiers for several visits as they are referred to me for treatment by their therapist and are expected to keep their appointments
2. The Physical Therapy appointment desk takes care of scheduling the appointments
3. The treatment table, linens, pillows are all provided
4. I have access to the Physical Therapists for questions on medical issues
5. I am not part of the hospital's patient record keeping and maintain my own records
6. I work my own schedule

Meet the soldiers:

What an amazing and varied group of clients! These soldiers are the most polite, committed and heart-wrenching clients that I have ever had the pleasure of working with. So many of them are so young. So many of them are so hurt. So many of them just want their lives back. And they are willing to do whatever they have to.

My first client was a female, a 20 year veteran with arthritic pain everywhere. She could barely stand to be touched and winced at the first moves. I'd like to say that we had amazing results after six sessions, but unfortunately it was very possible that it was in her best interest to stay in pain until she completed her military obligation. I became more skilled at Air Bowen and hope she found some level of improved comfort from her experience. While she couldn't admit to it, I noticed that her posture had improved, her walk was more energetic, and her overall outlook on life was more positive.

My next client was a young female soldier who was injured in basic training when she had to carry a "fallen comrade" (who weighed twice her body weight) for about one hour across a field. She was left with hairline fractures in both legs, and severe leg, hip and back pain. We started with the BRM's at her first session. I then added Respiratory and Upper Respiratory/TMJ before progressing to utilize the full array of lower limb moves. She responded very well to the Pelvic Procedure and was very good about doing her exercises. After stopping her sessions with me for several weeks, she found her discomfort returning and she rebooked. I have been seeing her every other week now, and she says that it's the Bowen Therapy that really works for her.

Three of my soldiers are young (21-25) heroes who survived explosions and traumatic head injury. They want to be well and want to return to active duty, but it is not likely. My heart goes out to them. They do not look seriously wounded, but they talk about persistent pain, sleepless nights and inability to do what they used to. They are very receptive to the Bowenwork and they really seem to appreciate someone paying such caring attention to them. Again, I started with the BRM's at their first sessions, added Respiratory and Upper

Respiratory/TMJ at subsequent sessions, then added procedures specific to their situations.

One of them reports that he no longer has seizures (yes, I did the specialized procedure for seizures), another that he feels so much better for days after his session, the third that his knee no longer hurts as much.

Overall, I have had sessions with 22 soldiers, slightly less than half of whom are women. Back problems have been the most common issue, followed by shoulder and neck problems. While only three of them have the serious head injuries, more than half of them are troubled by depression, anxiety and panic attacks. The most challenging part for me is remembering that "less is more." There is so much that can be done.

To track their progress, I've started to use a rating chart:

CHANGE RATING

A VERY GREAT DEAL WORSE	-7
A GREAT DEAL WORSE	-6
QUITE A BIT WORSE	-5
MODERATELY WORSE	-4
SOMEWHAT WORSE	-3
A LITTLE BIT WORSE	-2
A TINY BIT WORSE – ALMOST	-1
THE SAME	0
ABOUT THE SAME	+1
A TINY BIT BETTER – ALMOST	+2
THE SAME	+3
A LITTLE BIT BETTER	+4
SOMEWHAT BETTER	+5
MODERATELY BETTER	+6
QUITE A BIT BETTER	+7
A GREAT DEAL BETTER	
A VERY GREAT DEAL BETTER	

So far, there have been no "worse" ratings and only two of them have reported being "about the same." All the others have noted +1 to +7. Granted, this would appear to be a subjective way to measure results, but given the variety of issues and circumstances, it at least offers a consistent way of looking at progress.

The Physical Therapists were slow at first to refer their clients to me, but after hearing from their patients how much better they were feeling and noticing their improved physical comfort, they quickly started making more referrals. I adjusted my schedule and now see seven clients each Wednesday that I am there. Depending on demand, the next step will be working on more than one client at a time; the only constraint is lack of an additional treatment table.

My schedule has consistently been full for the last three months and it is such a joy for me to be there "working with the soldiers." What a blessing this Bowen work is!

And I would welcome the chance to speak with anyone about it. You can contact me by phone at 512 240-4323 or by email at hahngin@suddenlink.net