Not Your Average Rehab

Instrument Assisted Soft Tissue Mobilization

Instrument-Assisted Soft Tissue Mobilization (IASTM) is a therapeutic technique used to treat soft tissue injuries or conditions by using specialized instruments to detect and treat fascial restrictions, scar tissue, adhesions, or tight muscles. It's often used by physical therapists, chiropractors, and other healthcare providers to improve mobility and decrease pain.

Purpose

- The goal of IASTM is to break down adhesions or scar tissue and promote healing in damaged tissues.
- It helps improve tissue extensibility, decrease pain, and restore normal movement patterns.

Tools Used

- Specially designed instruments (often made of stainless steel or plastic) are used to apply controlled pressure to the tissue.
- These instruments typically have different shapes and edges to target various tissue types and areas.

Mechanism

- The instruments create a microtrauma to the soft tissue, which stimulates the body's natural healing response.
- This localized response increases blood flow, reduces inflammation, and promotes collagen production, helping to improve tissue quality over time.

Conditions Treated

IASTM is commonly used for chronic pain, myofascial pain syndromes, tendinopathies, scar tissue formation, and conditions like plantar fasciitis, IT band syndrome, rotator cuff injuries, and carpal tunnel syndrome.

Techniques

- The clinician uses the instruments to "scrape" or apply pressure along the tissue fibers in a controlled manner.
- Treatment may involve moving the instrument in various directions, depending on the area being treated.
- Some treatments may include light or moderate pressure, with the intensity adjusted according to the patient's tolerance.

Benefits

- Improved blood circulation to the treated area.
- Enhanced mobility and flexibility of affected tissues.
- Potential for faster recovery by promoting collagen remodeling and tissue repair.
- Reduction in muscle tension and pain.

Safety & Considerations

- It’s essential to ensure that IASTM is performed by a trained and licensed professional to avoid injury.
- It’s not suitable for acute injuries or areas with active inflammation, fractures, or open wounds.
- Some redness or bruising may occur post-treatment (known as "positive bruising"), which is typically temporary and part of the healing process.

Treatment Frequency

- Typically, IASTM is done over several sessions, spaced out a few days apart, to allow tissues to heal and adapt.
- After each session, stretching, strengthening exercises, or other forms of rehabilitation may be prescribed to maintain the benefits.

Conclusion

IASTM is often part of a comprehensive treatment plan that may also include exercises, manual therapy techniques, or modalities like electrical stimulation.