

Synopsis of Bradford University study on The Scotson

Technique

In 1978, Linda Scotson gave birth to her son Doran, whose diagnosis of cerebral palsy led her into an investigation into the recovery of children with neurological damage. She developed the charity Advance and subsequently the Scotson Technique (Advance, 2005c). Linda Scotson felt that evidence that the brain has potential for recovery was not borne out by long-term results of therapies for brain injured children, and the idea grew that there was another reason for this lack of progress. Through observation Linda noticed that the majority of children with neurological damage had breathing difficulties and this led to an exploration of an alternative treatment approach. Linda was encouraged in this exploration by Professor Patrick Wall, head of cerebral studies at University College London, who encouraged her to sit the qualifying exams for her PhD. Professor Wall introduced Linda to the ideas of cerebral plasticity and encouraged the use of the term 'restorative' in the approach that she was seeking to develop. Linda Scotson's research focused on the restoration of a more normal pattern of breathing in neurologically damaged children as a basis for their improvement. The hypothesis under investigation is that the Scotson Technique brings about physical change in children with neurological damage.

As Director of Advance Linda Scotson acknowledged that the basis for many of her claims that the children under therapy were appearing to improve could be seen as little more than enthusiasm for an approach that gave an alternative view and hope to families of children with neurological

damage in the absence of a definitive Governmental funded treatment. Advance therefore commissioned an exploratory study of the Scotson Technique through the Division of Rehabilitation Studies, University of Bradford. The areas selected for study were trunkal structure and sitting posture. The Bradford study project commenced in 2002 using the methods set out in the Medical Research council's "[A] Framework for the development and evaluation of complex interventions in healthcare" (MRC, 2000). This was to establish an evidence supported theoretical base, explore whether any effects were occurring in relation to the Technique and suggest what areas would be appropriate for study in a future research project.

The project started in July 2002 and finished in July 2005. The collection of data took place between November 2002 and September 2004. The data collected was based on an initial idea from Advance that the Technique caused a change in the physical shape of a child's chest. Normative data was available from the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI, 1995) for the majority of measurements taken. This enabled the data from the children at Advance to be compared with normative data for their age, gender and in some cases nationality. The study explored whether the children with measurements some distance from the normal ranges would, through the course of the treatment, move towards more normal values. This enabled change to be tracked.

The results show some areas of statistical significance which warrant further investigation, these namely being: shoulder width, chest width, thoracic index and neck circumference and waist circumference. In the areas where there was no statistically significant difference there was still change in a positive direction demonstrating that maturation continued.

The study demonstrated positive changes which are worthy of further investigation. The tracking of the children over two years has shown that, in the areas explored it does no harm and the children continued to develop along the lines predicted by the Technique's working strategy.

The theory as to why the Scotson Technique could potentially work has been investigated and shown to have a scientifically plausible evidence base with links to already accepted therapeutic modalities.

By choosing to explore the potential effects of the Scotson Technique, Advance made considerable steps towards the establishment of the Technique as a credible therapy for neurological damage. It showed itself willing to be judged by scientific principles, to undergo detached evaluation and not just rely on anecdotal information that is neither academically filtered nor peer reviewed. There are many factors limiting research in this field. Many funding bodies are reluctant to release monies for such research. Bodies with large resources such as pharmaceutical companies have little commercial interest in funding independent research. Advance did not have to undertake this evaluation and it was, and will be in the future, costly.

Advance appreciates that this initial exploratory study began the process of evaluation which was essential ground work.

Advance's goal is to be accepted as a credible therapy within the package provided for children with neurological damage through public funding.

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