

# MÉZIÈRES' METHOD AND MUSCULAR CHAINS' THEORY: FROM POSTURAL RE-EDUCATION'S PHYSIOTHERAPY TO ANTI-FITNESS CONCEPT

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Dear Editor,

I will try to resume, using a few words, the theoretical data of a complete method, with so many importance, from those icon of “medical gymnastique”, called Françoise Mézières (1909-1991). I consider the “Letter to the Editor” as a mean of exposing the basis of a method that is not scientifically granted (and that means that it has to be considered as a theoretical paradigm, like was formulated by the Thomas Kuhn and Michel Foucault epistemological models).

The comprehension of the Mézières' method in its truly theoretical and methodological amplitude, implies the comprehension of some rheumatological pathologies as a result of postural deformities. Specially, degenerative pathologies, like osteoarthritis, are related with postural structure.

This same “postural structure” has been “worked out” using antiques gymnastique methods that are based in a “strengthening” model. Françoise Mézières resumed that kind of gymnastique, like Yoga or Pilates, in her book called “La gymnastique statique”<sup>1</sup>. In the same year (1947), Mézières has realized the “observation” that caused a revolution in the manner of dealing with some rheumatological diseases. That “observation” resulted in this conclusion: the body, in a miofascial sense, compounds a global behaviour – called “muscular compensations” – mediated by the existence of global muscular groups of tonic nature, the “muscular chains”. These “chains”, that were reinvented by a lot of others authors (like Godelieve Denys-Struyf<sup>2</sup>, Leopold Busquet<sup>3</sup> or Souchart<sup>4</sup> from the Global Postural Re-education), would explain the body design, in a “statical posture” conception<sup>5</sup>, based in the scientific division of the muscular system between dynamic and static/tonic muscles, and it would create a morphoanalysis' model of treatment

– the Mézières' method – concentrated in the “global stretching postures of the contracted muscular chains”, using a treatment tripe: deslordosis, desrotation and diaphragmatic liberation.

So, the Mézières' concept defines postural deformities as “muscular excess” of tonic musculature – principally posterior musculature – describing lordosis as the primary cause of all deformities<sup>6</sup>. Mézières defined an amount of laws in her book “Originalité de la méthode Mézières”<sup>7</sup> (1<sup>st</sup>: “Les nombreux muscles postérieurs se comportent comme un seul et même muscle”; 2<sup>nd</sup>: “Les muscles des chaînes sont trop toniques et trop courts”; 3<sup>rd</sup>: “Toute action localisée, aussi bien élongation que raccourcissement, provoque instantanément le raccourcissement de l'ensemble du système”; 4<sup>th</sup>: “Toute opposition à ce raccourcissement provoque instantanément des latérofléxions et des rotations du rachis et des membres”; 5<sup>th</sup>: “La rotation des membres due à l'hypertonie des chaînes s'effectue toujours en dedans”; 6<sup>th</sup>: “Toute élongation, détorsion, douleur, tout effort implique instantanément le blocage respiratoire en inspiration”) that were important to define revolutionary methodologies of treatment and a novel concept with implications to the physical therapy's world and sports' world, which was understood by Bertherat<sup>8</sup> and remembered by «Postural Reconstruction»'s Nisand<sup>9</sup>.

In a physical therapy's and sports' world that is so obsessively stuck to treatment's methodologies based in the “strengthening model” of the “weak muscles”, the Mézières' concept implies a radical modification in the therapies' methods. These should give value to the relaxation, the tonic inhibition and the global and progressive stretching of the muscular regions with imbalance. Moreover, such methodological implications oblige to a serious revision of the System's operation. A new model of Fitness and “Workout” is needed. In this concept, it is considered the creation of the *anti-fitness* concept<sup>10</sup>.

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