

Proprioceptive Neuromuscular Facilitation (PNF) in Sport Medicine

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Abstract

The PNF concept developed by Dr Herman Kabat and the physiotherapist Margaret Knott and Dorothy Voss is currently a recognized therapeutic approach to be applied on patients with after effects in their sensorimotor system as a consequence of a sport injury. One of the key aspects is to consider the role of the central nervous system in the reception of information from the outer world through the sensorial system, the processing of this information and the elaboration of appropriate responses to movement control.

The basic processes and specific techniques of PNF, are based on classic neurophysiology concepts and principles. The basic processes are maneuvers used by the physiotherapist to give a specific sensorial input, influencing in this way the central nervous system in order to recover the neurophysiological mechanisms, which in turn help regulate the movement. PNF attaches great importance to the proprioceptive input and to other sensorial reinforcements such as the vision, hearing, touch and kinesthesia. The specific techniques are directed to particular problems of the neuromuscular function (strength, endurance, range of movement, muscular relaxation capacity, movement direction, speed, coordination, etc) acting on neurophysiological mechanisms such as reciprocal innervation, successive induction, temporal and spatial summation, or irradiation. These basic processes and specific techniques are used in diagonal and spiral patterns of steering movement like the movements athletes perform during their activities.

The aim of this work is to introduce the PNF concept, its basic processes and its specific techniques, as a different way of approaching the sensorimotor system in the process of rehabilitation of athletes who have suffered an injury or as part of the prevention of injuries.

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