

Cross-crawling

Another area which has recently come into the public's awareness is the neurological organization of the brain. As school children we were told about the dominance and cross-over of the separate hemispheres of the brain, with the right side controlling the left side of the body, and the left side of the brain controlling the right side of the body. There is also a separation in the functions of the brain, with intellectual concerns, voluntary and involuntary muscle control, internal regulation of the body functions and emotional centers all occupying different areas within the brain itself. As shown by Doman and Delacato, the neurological balance requires dominance of one hemisphere over the other and one side of the body over the other. After sufficient development through infancy and early childhood, the right and left sides being developed more or less equally or bilaterally in muscle coordination, handedness and intellectual or academic learning can proceed normally.

If the weakness in the individual person seems to be stabilized in one particular area or on one side of the body, whether it be the supraspinatus muscle related to the brain or another muscle which is used regularly, this can be an indication of the crossing effect between the right and left sides of the body and the brain not being accomplished. This can be tested using the cross-crawling technique.

First test the muscles in question and strengthen them using the conventional methods. (This is assuming that they do respond to treatment but become weak again when the muscle is used.) Then we test the need for cross-crawling by doing the opposite, that is, homolateral crawling. With the person lying face up, pick up his right arm and leg together and raise the arm back behind the head, the leg up with the knee bent as if to crawl. Return them back down to the side of the body and repeat by picking up the left arm and leg. The person being tested should look straight up. Repeat this above five times and then re-test the muscle. If the muscle which was just strong is now weak, then cross-crawling would probably be helpful.

Cross-crawling is modeled after the correct crawling motions of the infant, with some therapeutic modifications. The normal crawling or creeping involves moving the right arm and left leg forward at the same time. Then the left arm and right leg are brought forward. Cross-crawling as an exercise is most efficiently done lying face up.

After causing weakness to return using the homolateral crawl, use the cross-crawl cycle five times in succession. If cross-crawling is helpful to that person, the muscles now should be strong without using any other treatment. Cross-crawl is very useful, especially with children and people who experience learning and/or coordination difficulties. When working with little ones, it's probably necessary to perform the exercise when the child is passive (see illustration below). Adults can usually do the exercise unassisted. Occasionally check to re-evaluate the need to continue the cross-crawl exercise.

Twenty-five complete sets or cycles of the arm and leg motions can be done at one time, and repeated three or four times per day. Use as many different contralateral movements as can be devised for a general exercise and improved flexibility.

