



**Back Stability: Integrating Science and Therapy (2nd Edition)** by Christopher M Norris. Human Kinetics, 2008. 347 pages. ISBN:9780736070171. €37.15. Reviewer: Mairead Conneely, MISCPC, M Sports Physio, B Sc (Hons) Physio, Private Practitioner, Co. Galway. email: maireadcon@hotmail.com

This is the 2nd edition of Christopher Norris's popular "Back Stability" book originally published in 2000. The book is

aimed at clinicians, mainly physiotherapists, working with patients suffering from low back pain. The author has expanded from the original text and renamed the 2nd edition to link the findings in research trials to the treatment room. The book is well written and reader friendly. Each chapter contains key points highlighted in bold and tables to review important paragraphs. There is also a summary to conclude each chapter.

The book is divided into five sections: Conceptual Foundation, Establishing Stability, Progressing Stability Training, Building Back Fitness and Clinical Application. The first section (chapters one to four) explores the problem of back pain, including the aetiology, prevalence and costs associated with back pain. This section also contains well written chapters on the biomechanics of the lumbar spine and the anatomy of the stabilising structures of the spine. The current literature on lumbar stabilisation is reviewed and the reader is introduced to the concept of functional rehabilitation or motor control. The author introduces that there is a subgroup of back pain patients that will not resolve with medication and manipulation and that the problem these patients present with is instability. Thus this book is aimed at helping this subgroup of patients. This is an important concept and I thought that it deserved more attention in the opening chapters.

Section 2 (chapters five to seven) takes the reader to the clinical assessment and this is the section where the book will be most useful in a clinical setting. The areas of posture, muscle imbalance and lumbar-pelvic dissociation are dealt with in good detail, and illustrations/photographs of the assessment and teaching of pelvic control are included. This section reviews the concept of the traditional abdominal hollowing procedure, but progresses to functional movements in a logical manner. One of the book's strongest aspects is the clarity of the illustrations and the format of the progression of the assessment/rehabilitation.

Section 3 (chapters eight to eleven) deal with the progression of rehabilitation to improve spinal proprioception, and to further challenge the stability of the spine with limb movement. These chapters introduce adjuncts such as gym balls and foam rollers, and a large number of illustrations follow to show their use in rehabilitation. My only concern with the book is that the illustrations could become a recipe of progression for rehabilitation and the individual's needs ignored.

Section 4 (chapters twelve to sixteen) concentrates on patients who are chasing performance in addition to stability, and includes the use

of gym machines, and improving speed and power in core training. This section contains minimal text but more illustrations on carrying out various functional tasks in a gym (lunge, squat, dead lift etc). The illustrations are very helpful in demonstrating movement analysis, and teaching points are included with the images to aid the reader.

Section 5 (chapters seventeen to nineteen) covers the assessment of patients with back pain and gives hints on how to design a program for a patient based on all the exercises covered in Sections 2, 3 and 4. The author recommends a "needs analysis" review of the patients needs. The approach is simple but specific and is an area that I think could have been expanded on in the early chapters of the book and not left to the final chapters. The book concluded with five case histories to demonstrate the clinical application of Norris's back stability program. There is an extensive bibliography list that partners well with the text.

I would recommend this book to physiotherapists based on its concise format and easy reading. Section 1 gives a detailed overview of the anatomy and biomechanics of the spine. The remaining sections are the real substance of the book with illustrations to demonstrate the assessment and rehabilitation of the patient.