What is Myofascial Stretching?

For a long time now we believed that we knew how to stretch muscles; however, how do you stretch a muscle when it is sheathed in a leather casing? Muscles are three dimensional in shape with multiple sites of attachment and fascia is the thin ‘skin’ weaving into and surrounding structures like the muscle tissue, ‘linking’ various structures together in a chain that includes the joint or joint capsule.

All the connective tissue in the body is made of water and this water is arranged in microscopic tubules. Perhaps even more amazing is that the fascia is continuous upon itself: it is one single entity. In order to stretch a specific muscle it is better to consider it as a link in a specific chain extending from the toes to the back of the knee, inserting into one or more of the ligaments of the pelvis. This is the ‘real anatomy’ of the body and respects the global organization of its tissues. A stretching posture will be chosen to solicit the tension of the whole fascial chain in order to correct the specific muscle link.

With myofascial stretching (MFS), the goal is not to gain flexibility of a muscle, but to improve the quality of the movement of the tissues in relation to one another. MFS is the only type of stretching that respects this organization.

General Presentation of the Fascia by Guy VOYER, DO

The information below comes from Les ELDOA – 2003 written by Guy VOYER, DO

Fascia is the sheet of areolar or fibroelastic tissue that sheaths the entire body and the organs. It insinuates itself between the muscles. It sheaths the nerves, blood vessels and lymphatics

All the connective tissue (except the bones) is organized in the shape of fasciae. They are envelopes, sheaths, septum, support membranes, separating sheets or the attachment points.

This tissue network is suspended from osseous attachments. The tensions of the connective tissue depend on their integrity and vice versa…the quality of the movement of bone and joints depends on the quality of the connective tissue.

The Fascia in the Writings of A.T. Still

"It is in the fascia that we must look for the cause of disease and the beginning of healing action"

"…we can see all the beauties of life on exhibition by the great power with which the fascia is endowed… the framework of life, the dwelling place on which life so adjourns… can find all disturbing causes of life, the place that diseases germinate and grow, the seeds of disease and death."

"Why not release, contract, stimulate, and clean the whole system of all diseases by that willing and sufficient power to rejuvenate all parts of the system from deadly components that generate through the delay and stagnation of fluids while in the fascia."

"The general laws of nutrition to nourish life are to be found in the fascia and the nerves."

A Brief Summary of the Fascia

Although the fasciae present intermediate and anastomotic planes they are divided arbitrarily into three layers;

Superficial layer: includes the different layers of the skin.

The middle layer: (from superficial to deep): the epicranial epineurosis and the fascia superficialis, the aponeuroses

The deeper layer: the dura mater or pachymeninges is the external layer of the meninges of mesenchymal origin. It is made up of several stratified layers of collagen fibers separated from one another by flattened cells. Each layer has a different direction in relation to its adjacent supra and infra layers which provides a significant resistance and inextensibility to the whole.

Dura Mater

The spinal cord is a flexible, elastic structure and nervous tissue is soft and delicate; the neurons can be injured by even slight pressure. For this, there are several layers of protection - the meninges which includes the dura mater and the cerebrospinal fluid - CSF.

The **dura mater** is two parts - the spinal dura mater, and the cranial dura mater.

Spinal Dura Mater

The **spinal dura mater** continues without interruption from the cranial dura mater at the circumference of the foramen magnum and forms a continuous cylindrical sheath extending from the foramen magnum through the sacral canal containing the spinal cord from which it is separated by the leptomeninges and the cerebral spinal fluid. (Les ELDOA – 2003)

At its superior part the spinal dura mater attaches to the entire extent of the circumference of the foramen magnum, perforated by two vertebral arteries facing the occipital – atlas articulations, and to the posterior surface of the body of the axis.

At its inferior part, where it constitutes the inferior dural sack or spinal recess, it inserts into the sacral canal at the level of the second sacral segment through a strong fibrous sacro-dural ligament of Trolard.

The spinal dura mater is attached to the posterior longitudinal ligament, which is located anterior to it by fibrous tracts, which are more numerous in the cervical and lumbar regions, but still allow a relative amount of freedom.

Cranial Dura Mater

The cranial dura mater presents two layers: the external layer is applied to the skull with no epidural space. The internal layer sends out continuations, or expansions that partition (divide) the cranial cavity and separate the different neural elements which are found there. Two sagittal extensions: faux cerebri and faux cerebelli.

There are three relatively horizontal extensions – tentorium cerebelli, tentorium of the hypophysis, tentorium of the olfactory bulb.

Two relatively vertical extensions are the tentorium of the optic nerve and Meckel's cavum.

In the mechanical organization of the body, the spinal and cranial dura mater constitute the first of the chain. The PRM itself will be very important to the treatment of the fasciae and the ELDOA exercises.

The Fasciae: Some Words to Remember According to Guy VOYER, DO

There are three components that are important in the biology of the fascia – *cells, fibers, and the matrix.*

The Cells: *fibroblasts, mastocytes, adipocytes, macrophages, plasmocytes, and leukocytes.*

The Fibers: *collagen, retinaculum, elastin.*

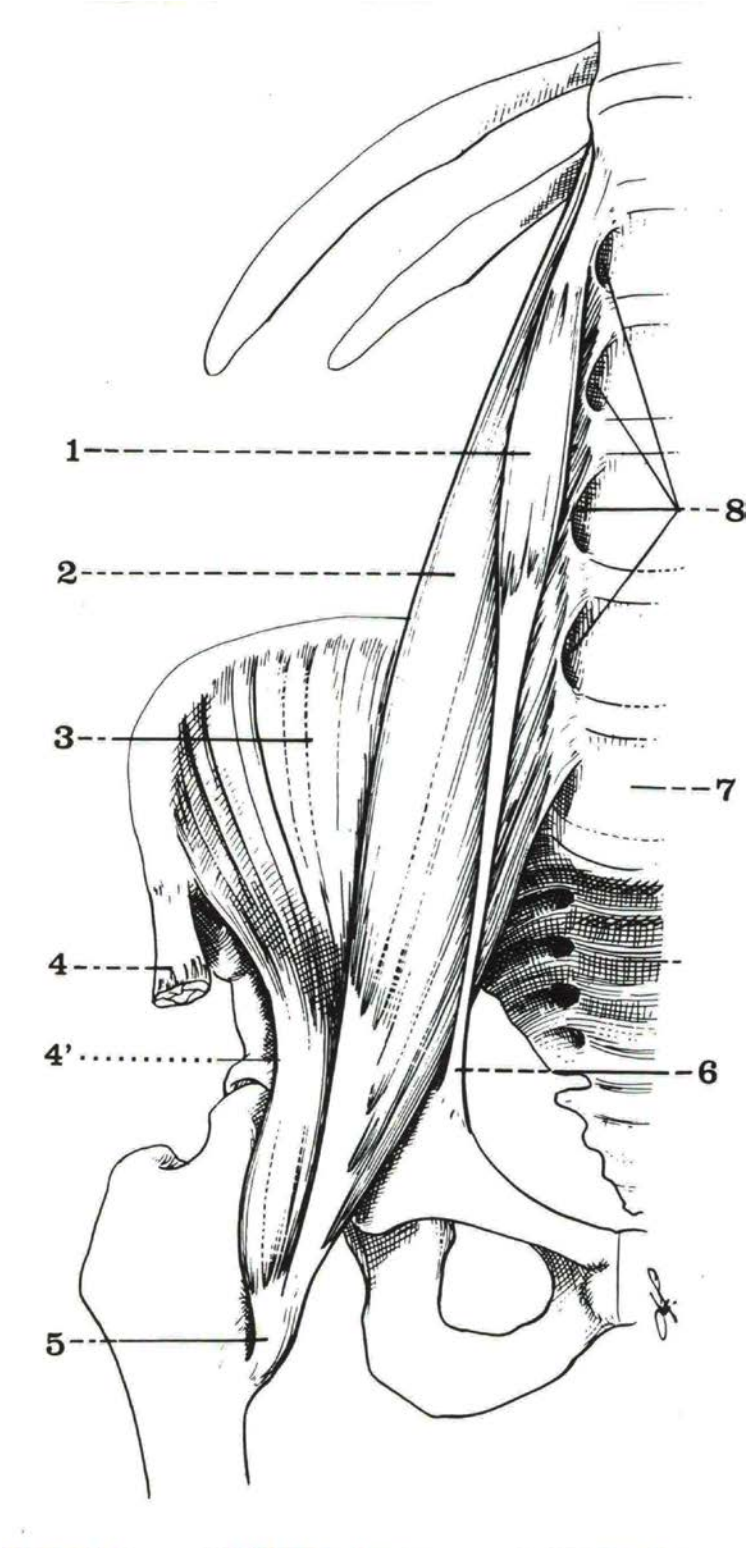
The Matrix (ECM): the ECM is a complex of macromolecules manufactured by cells and exported by them to the extracellular space. The ECM of the connective tissue proper, the most common connective tissue in the body is composed of hydrated gel-like ground substance with fibers embedded in it. The ground substance resists forces of compression and fibers withstand tensile forces.

The water of hydration permits a rapid exchange of nutrients and waste products carried by the extracellular fluid as it moves through the ground substance.

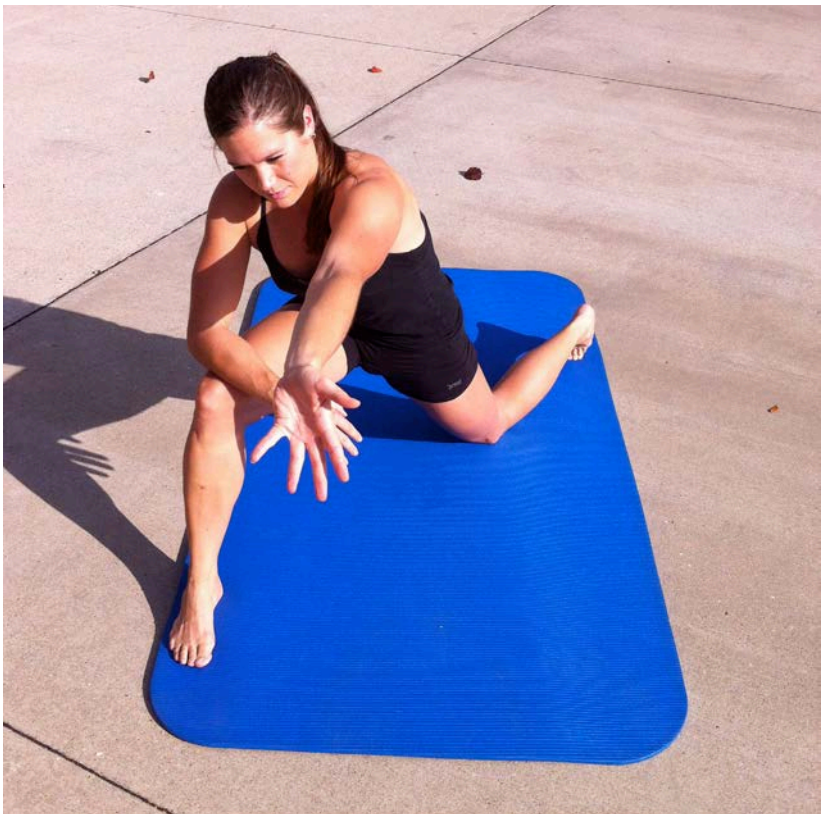
Ground substance is composed of Glycoaminoglycans (GAGs), proteoglycans, and adhesive glycoproteins. These three families of macromolecules form various interactions with each other, with fibers, and with the cells of connective tissue and epithelium.

Types of GAGs: Hyaluronic acid, Keratan, Heparin, Chondroitin, Dermatim.

Ilio-Psoas



MFS Ilio-Psoas

Muscle Action:	Muscle Counter-Action:
Position of Client:	**Photo(s):**
	
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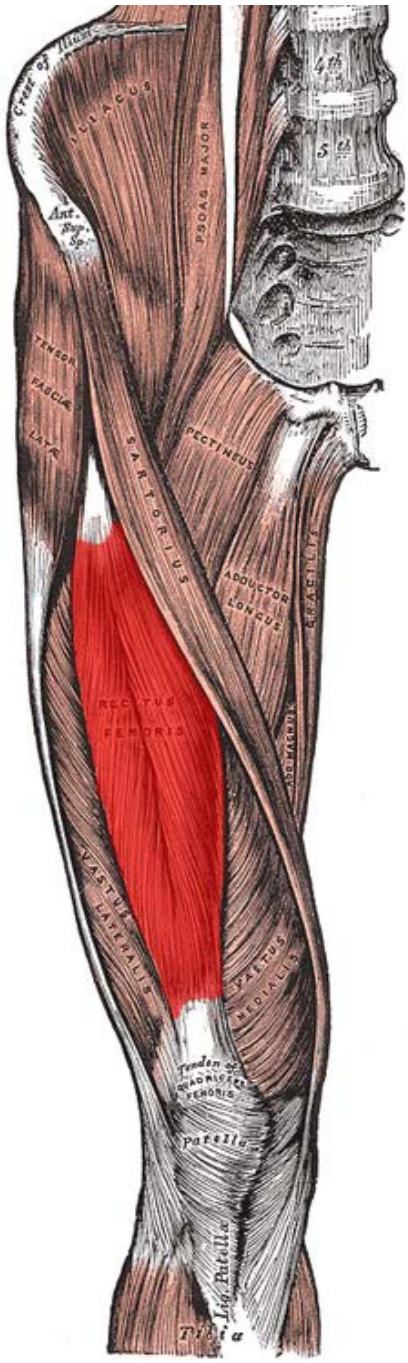
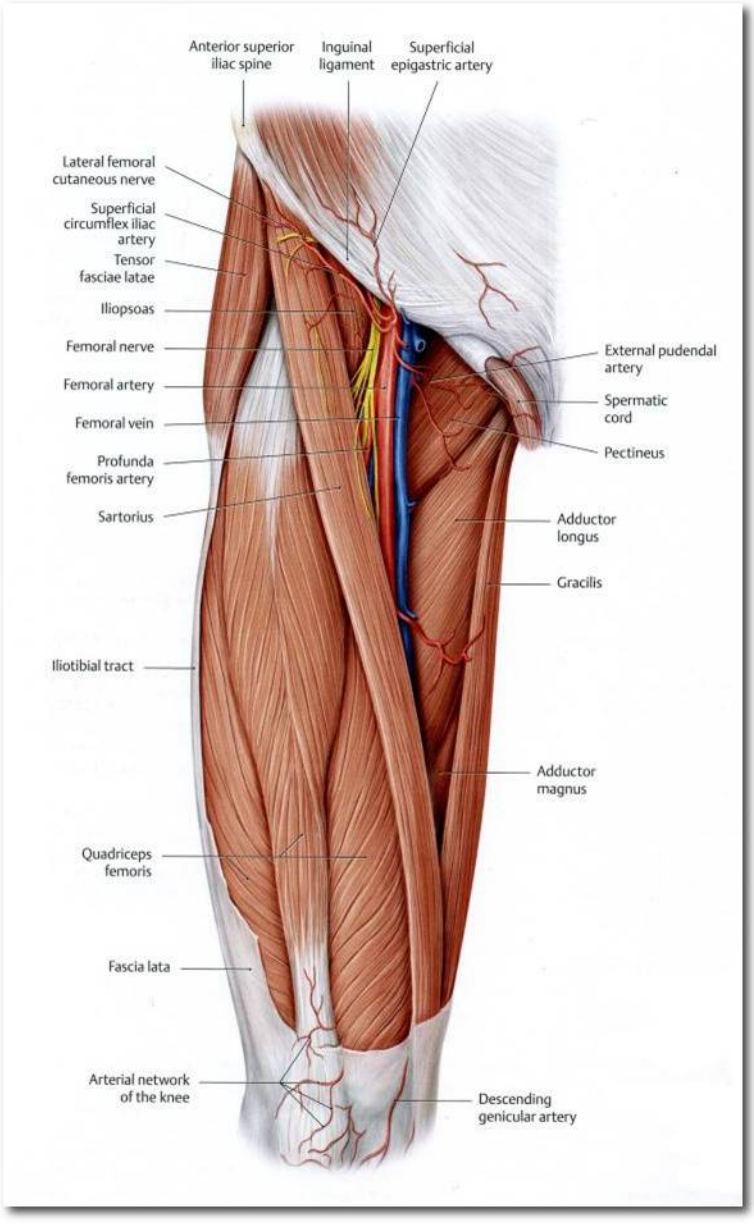
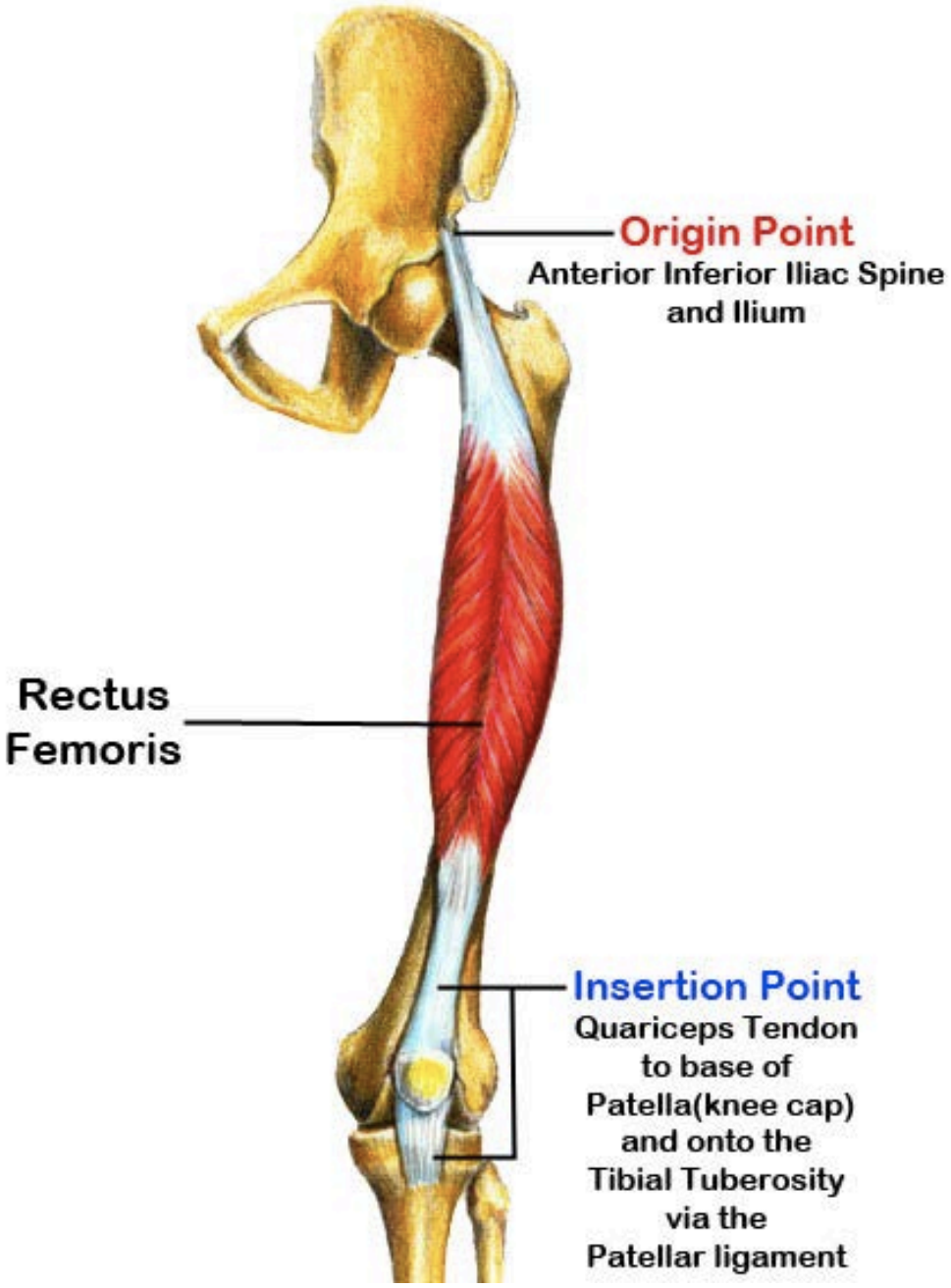
Based upon the work of Guy VOYER, DO

Rectus Femoris







MFS Rectus Femoris

Muscle Action:	Muscle Counter-Action:
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	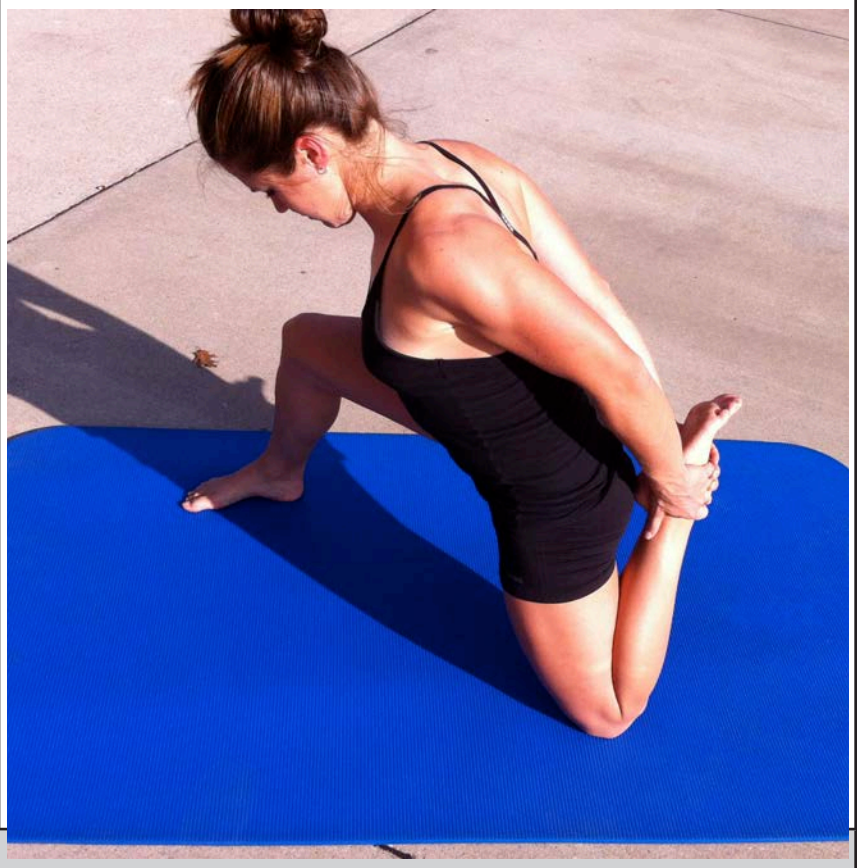
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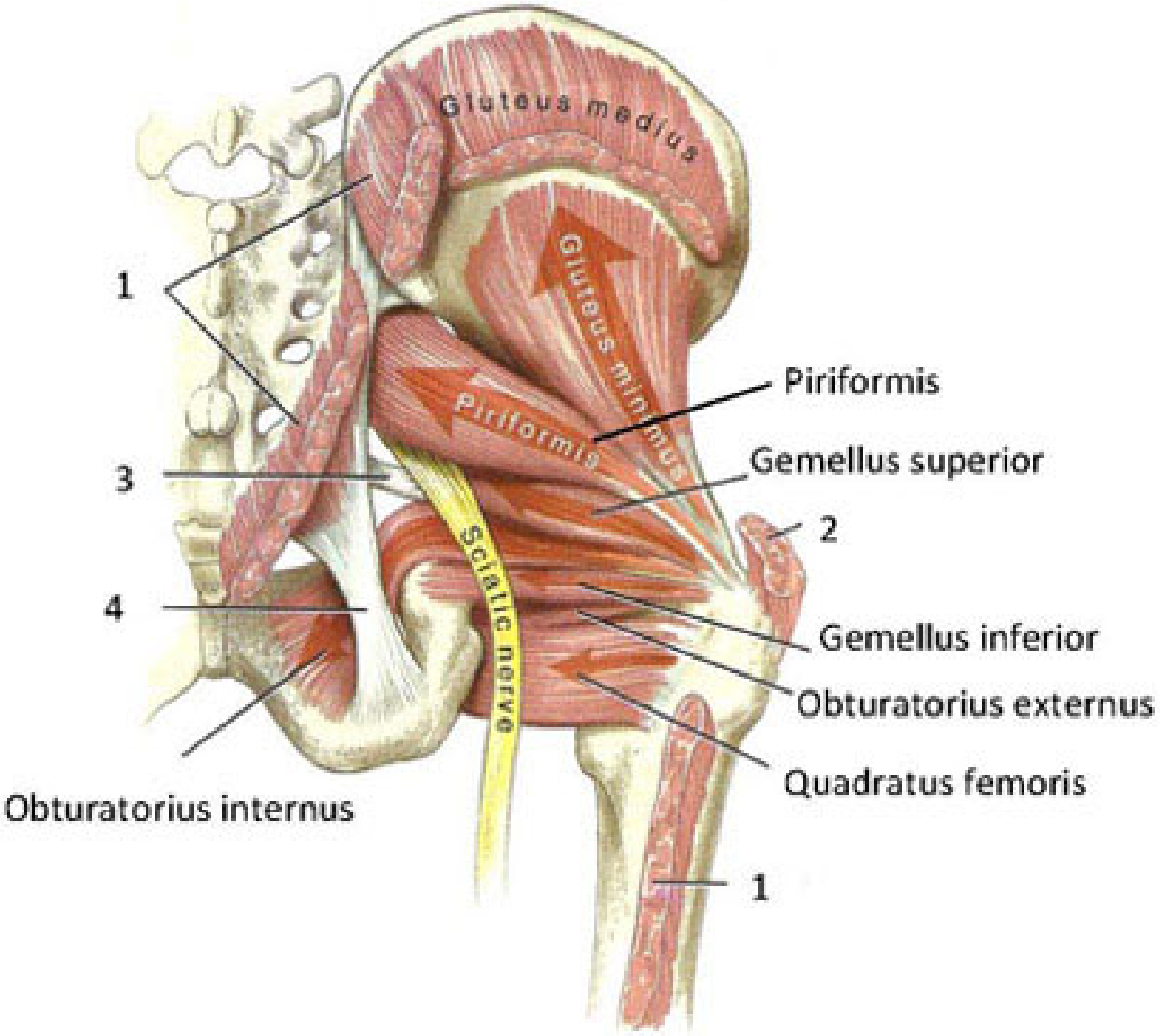
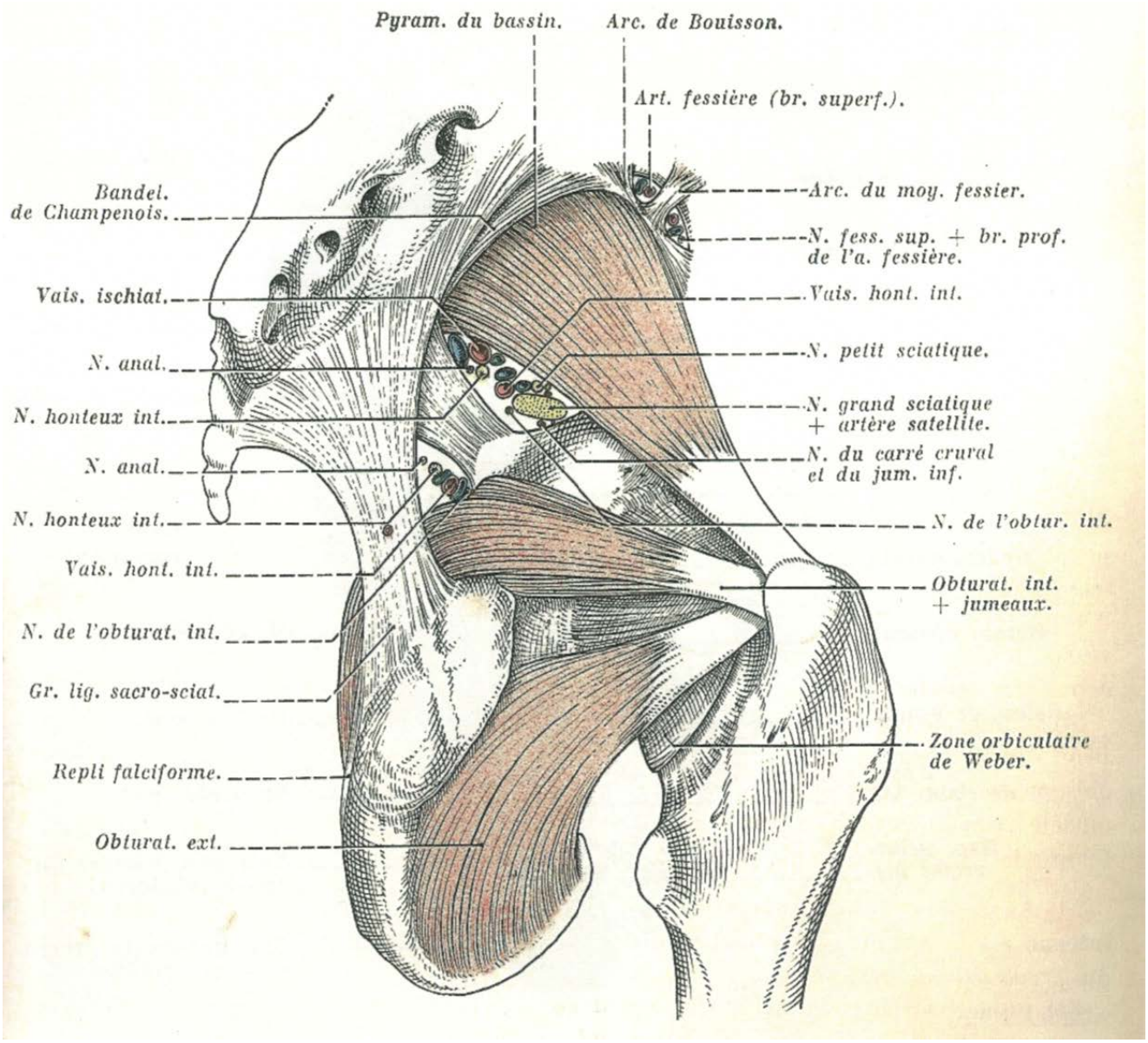
Piriformis





MFS Piriformis

Muscle Action:	Muscle Counter-Action:
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	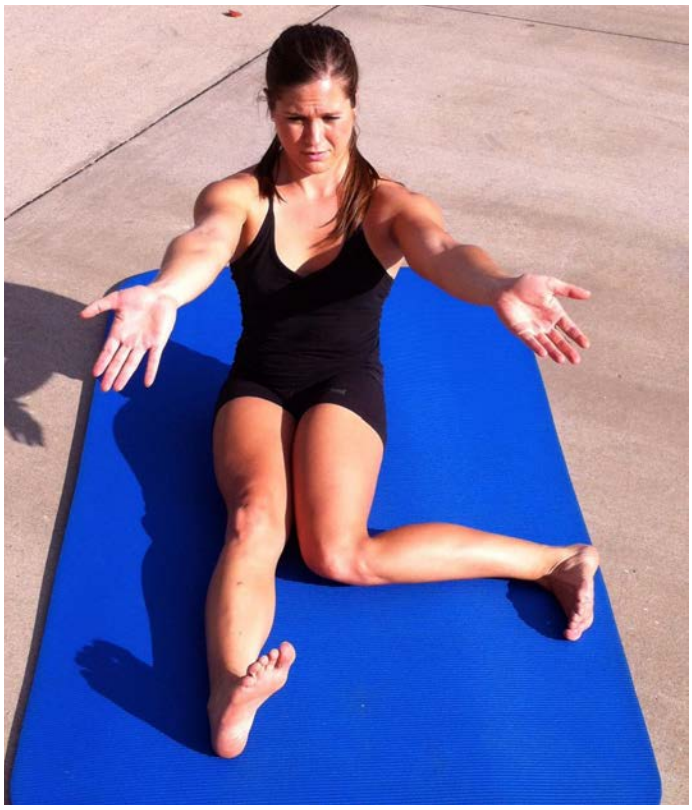
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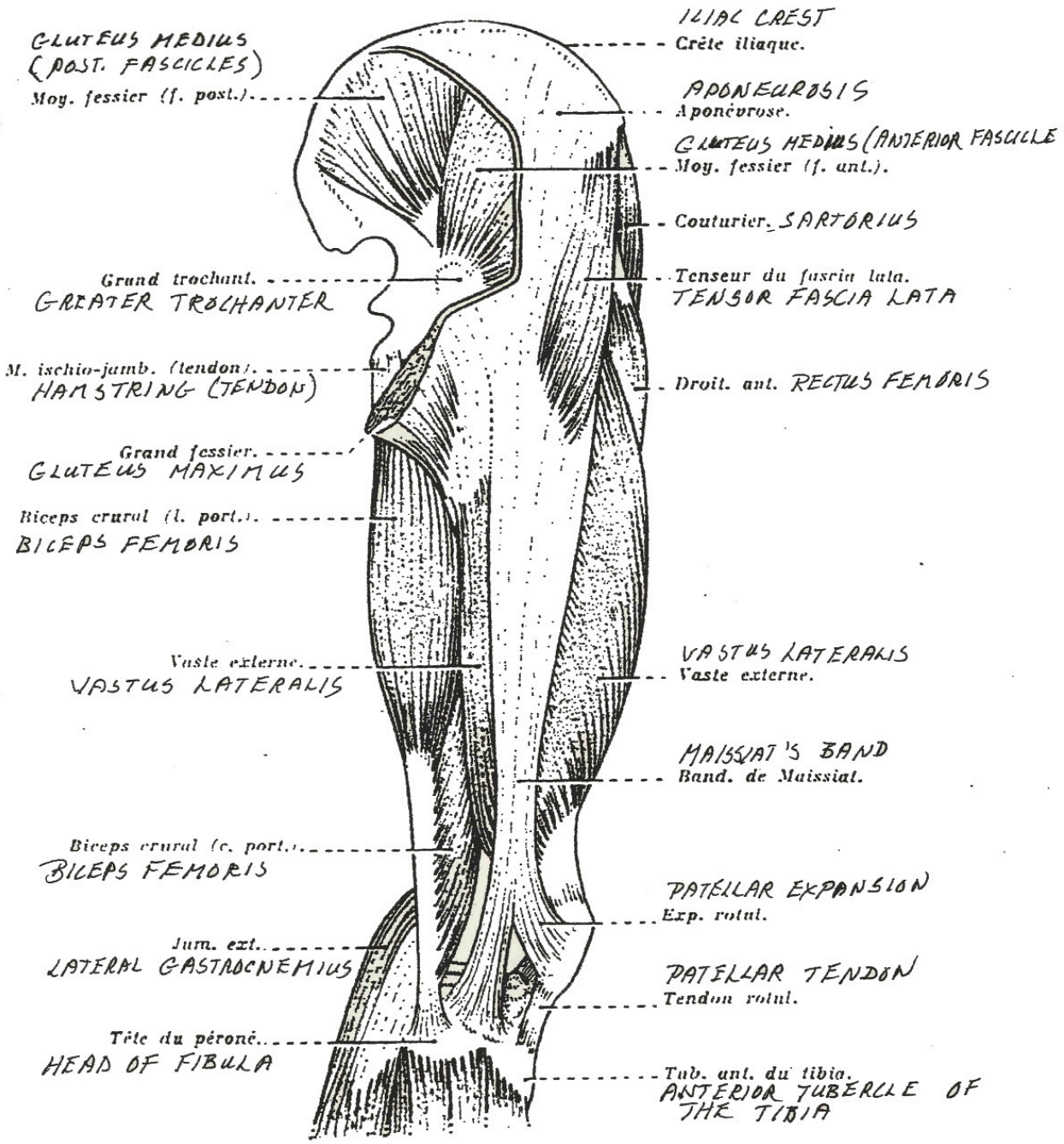

Muscles de la cuisse: côté droit, vue externe (le grand fessier a été sectionné et enlevé).

THIGH MUSCLES: RIGHT SIDE. LATERAL VIEW

(GLUTEUS MAXIMUS

The New Myofascial Stretching Certification Program

Myofascial Stretching Level 1: The most frequently used myofascial stretching postures

Myofascial Stretching Level 2: Expands upon the stretching postures from Level 1 with Factors of Progression and introduces new stretches for the upper and lower limb, and trunk

Myofascial Stretching Level 3: This course is taught by Guy VOYER, DO.
The theory and descriptive anatomy of the fascia and the fascial chains are key points of discussion and adaptations to the classic stretching postures in Levels 1 and 2 are taught.

To learn more about the new Myofascial Stretching Program, go to www.legacyperformwell.com .