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SHOULDER ANATOMY MARCH 2007 NEWSLETTER

Someone asked me recently why the shoulders were "so important" in massage.

The way the question was worded gave me pause to think about this particular area, as it is true that the "bread & butter" part of my business is dealing with issues related to the shoulder, shoulder blades and neck. Shoulder issues are often difficult to assess because of the many structures located in a small area, the variety of possible movements, and the many lesions that can occur inside and outside the joints.

For most people, "shoulder" is a term is used generally for the area between where the neck ends and the arm begins. For us technical anatomy folks, the shoulder is a *complex* involving several joints and many structures. There is:

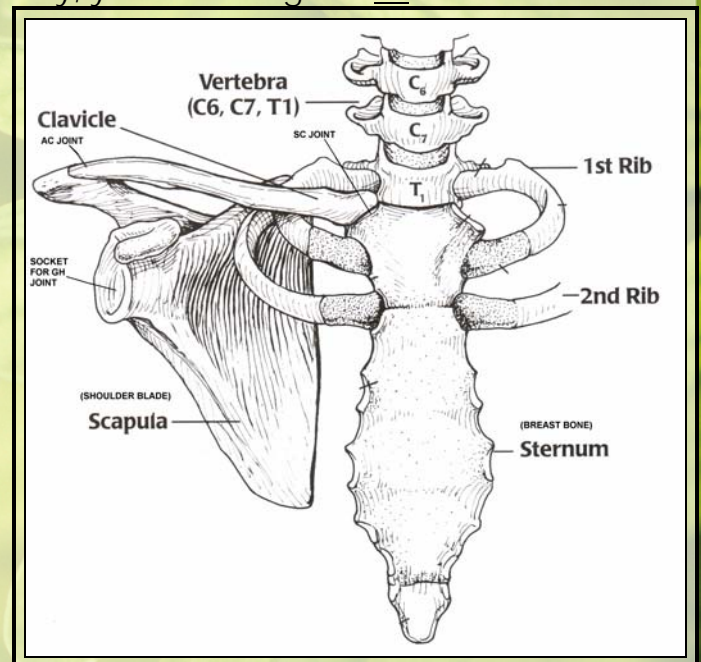
- The ball and socket joint where your arm joins your body (GH joint)
- where your collar bone joins your shoulder (AC joint)
- where your collar bone meets your breastbone (SC joint)
- where your shoulder blade sits on the back of the rib cage (this isn't a true joint, but an integral part of the complex).

For the shoulder blade (scapula) alone, there are 16 separate muscles that attach to it from various other places such as the neck and back vertebrae, shoulder bones, ribs, skull, collarbone, and upper arm bone. These muscles perform various movement functions between:

- the neck and the shoulder
- the shoulder blades and the back
- the upper arm and shoulder joint
- the head and shoulder
- shoulder joint rotational movements
- the upper arm and the back
- the ribs and the shoulder blades
- the shoulder blade and throat

The GH joint is quite shallow, and thus relies heavily on ligaments and all this musculature

for support, stability and integrity (ie: keeping the upper arm --the ball -- secured into the "socket"). The benefit of this design allows for great ranges of motion in many directions and areas – the downside is that all these joints and muscles are easily strained, separated, dislocated, and injured. This of course often affects the other areas to which these muscles attach. For you desk jockeys out there with your arm outstretched on a mouse pad and head poked forward at a computer screen all day, you're feeling it in all these areas!



(zoom to 150% to see labels)

If you're experiencing shoulder problems, by all means, contact me for an appointment. Next month I'll outline some stretches and strengtheners for the typical problem areas associated with the shoulder blade.

I'm looking to hire an associate R.M.T., preferably with experience and established clientele. If you know anyone, please have them contact me.