TECHNIQUES FOR THE GLUTEAL REGION AND COCCYX

As the glutei are such strong muscles and are in close proximity to the sciatic nerve they may play an important role in production and maintenance of sciatic pain syndromes. Hypertonic glutei can affect posture and prevent normal mechanical relationship of the hips to the rest of the body. There may be a tendency for the hips to rotate outwards and thus upset locomotion, sitting and standing postures. Lumbar origin pain syndromes will often present as tense painful areas in the glutei, piriformis and gamelli, and work on these can be helpful in treatment of such cases.

Particular caution is rarely necessary in working on the glutei except that a Ewing’s tumour in the bone or the ilium itself can present as gluteal pain. Due to the sensitive nature of the area, particular care needs to be taken with the treatment here so that no accusations of improper handling can occur. Informing the patient of the purpose or a particular procedure should eliminate this problem.

The coccyx is commonly a site of pain although many cases are due to referred pain from the lumbar spine. It is, however, possible to have a dysfunctional junction between the sacrum and the coccyx. There are techniques that approach the joint through the rectum, but external techniques are generally preferred by patients and operators alike!

Particular precautions include the possibility of fracture if there has been direct trauma, and rare cases of referred pain from the rectum in the presence of a space-occupying lesion.
15.1 **Kneading prone** Use your thumb to apply cross-fibre kneading to the ischial tuberosity and lower part of gluteus maximus. The other hand applies a counter-force, partly to limit the forces to a specific part of the muscles, and partly to reduce the discomfort of direct pressure.

**Tips:** Most useful in cases of ischial tuberosity bursitis, muscle strains and residual sciatica. Least useful where prone lying might be a problem. **Extra considerations:** The pillow under the abdomen is for patient comfort. Try using varied degrees of abduction in the thigh, or a pillow under the tibia to flex the knee and reduce stretch on the posterior thigh muscles.

15.2 **Kneading prone** Apply a kneading force to the glutei, gamelli and piriformis on the opposite side of the patient. The other hand monitors the stretch produced, and spreads the effect of the hold to reduce any discomfort.

**Tips:** Least useful where prone lying may be a problem. Exquisite tender areas will often be found in the glutei in lumbar dysfunction syndromes, and although these are often due to referred pain, they can be maintaining factors. Recovery can be enhanced if these muscles are relaxed to allow freer pelvic movement. **Extra considerations:** The pillow under the abdomen will usually aid patient comfort. Try abducting the leg by varied amounts to find the optimum.