

# I have a meme...

by Nick MATHESON

Physiotherapist

Almost one score ago, a great Australian, in whose shadow we stand, wrote Mobilization of the Nervous System. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions (okay, a few hundred) physical therapists who had been seared in the heat of the hydrocollator. It came as a joyous daybreak to the end of a long night of confusion. But sixteen years later, we must face the tragic fact that the physical therapist is still bewildered.

Sixteen years later, the life of the physical therapist is sadly crippled by the manacles of managed care and the chains of evidence-based medicine. Sixteen years later, the physical therapist lives on a lonely island of illusion in the midst of a vast ocean of research. Sixteen years later, the physical therapist is still languishing in the corners of health care and finds himself an exile from the doctors' lounge.

So we have come here today to dramatize an appalling condition. In a sense we have come to SomaSimple to cash a check. When the architects of our profession wrote the magnificent words of our Code of Ethics and Scope of Practice, they were signing a promissory note to which every physical therapist was to fall heir.

This note was a promise that all physical therapists would be guaranteed the inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It is obvious today that Blue Cross has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as physical therapists are concerned. Instead of honoring our work, insurance cos. have given physical therapists a bad check which has come back marked "insufficient funds." But we refuse to believe that the bank of HMOs is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of financial institutions of this nation.

So we have come to cash this check -- a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom to think and the security to practice in accordance with the natural law of the universe. We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind people of the fierce urgency of now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of mesoderm to the sunlit path of neurophysiology. Now is the time to open the

doors of opportunity to all ectodermalists. Now is the time to lift our professions from the quicksands of superstition to the solid rock of science.

It would be fatal for the profession to overlook the urgency of the moment and underestimate the determination of the SomaSimplers. The sweltering summer of the SomaSimpler's discontent will not pass until there is an invigorating autumn of thinking and theory. Two thousand and six is not an end, but a beginning. Those who hope that the SomaSimpler needed to blow off steam and will now be content will have a rude awakening if the profession continues with business as usual. There will be neither rest nor tranquility in Physical Therapy until theory is considered at least as important as evidence, until why has ascended to the level of what and how.

The whirlwind of revolt will continue to shake the foundations of our profession until the bright day when thoughtfulness emerges. But there is something that I must say to my people who stand on the warm threshold that leads into the palace of the brain. In the process of gaining our rightful place we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for placebo power by drinking from the cup of mobilipulation.

We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into name-calling and condescension. Again and again we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with gentle hands.

The marvelous new militancy which has engulfed SomaSimple must not lead us to distrust of all other therapists, for many of our colleagues, as evidence by the occasional surfing of the net and lurking on our board, are coming to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny and their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom.

We cannot walk alone. And as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall march ahead. We cannot turn back. There are those who are asking the devotees of neurobiology, "When will you be satisfied?" we can never be satisfied as long as our bodies, heavy with the fatigue of sitting at our computers, cannot gain an audience in the greater health care community. We cannot be satisfied as long as the physical therapist's basic mobility is from one tissue to another. We can never be satisfied as long as a therapist in Cuyahoga Falls cannot get others to listen and a therapist in San Diego believes he has nothing to listen to. No, no, we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until action potentials roll down like waters and synapse like a might stream.

I am not unmindful that some of you have come here out of great trials and tribulations. Some of you have come fresh from Myofascial Release courses. Some of you have come from areas where your quest for knowledge left you battered by the

storms of guru worship and staggered by the winds of postural assessment and manual muscle testing. You have been the veterans of creative suffering. Continue to work with the faith that unearned suffering is redemptive (especially teaching Cross Country).

Go back to British Columbia, go back to Ohio, go back to Wisconsin, go back Down Under, go back to the departments and clinics, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed. Let us not wallow in the valley of despair. I say to you today, my friends, that in spite of the difficulties and frustrations of the moment, I still have a meme. It is a meme that must grow roots within the meme of Physical Therapy.

I have a dream that one day this profession will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "Physiotherapy - it'll move you!" I have a dream that one day on the rocky shores of Nova Scotia the daughters of neurodermomodulators and the sons of manipuloids will be able to sit down together at a table of consensus. I have a dream that one day even the state of Ohio, a desert state, sweltering with the heat of ignoring the obvious, will be transformed into an oasis of free movement and thoughtful touch. I have a dream that my three children will one day live in a nation where they will be judged not by the strength of their muscles or the erectness of their posture or their ability to sit still but rather by their willingness to move freely without permission and their authenticity and enduring comfort in the face of cultural challenges. I have a dream today.

I have a meme that one day the world's physical therapy associations, whose press releases are presently dripping with the words of myokinematics and joint biomechanics and even fascial fantasies, will be transformed into a situation where little chiropractors will be able to join hands with little physical therapists and walk together down a path enlightened by neurobiology. I have a meme that one day every neuron shall be exalted, every joint glide made low, the muscle will be made plain, and the skin made alive, and the glory of the nervous system shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together. This our hope. This is the faith which I return to the Internet. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our professions into a beautiful symphony of social grooming. With this faith we will be able to work together, to write together, to juggle together, to go online together, to stand up for thinking together, knowing that we will be free one day.

This will be the day when all physical therapists will be able to sing with a new meaning, "Neurology, 'tis of thee, sweet subject long forgot, of thee I sing. Orthopaedics has died, study of therapists' pride, from every con ed course, let freedom ring." And if Physical Therapy is to be a great profession, this must become true. So let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of Nanaimo. Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York. Let freedom ring from Barrie and Adelaide

and Sydney and Vancouver and Dunblane. But not only that; let freedom ring from SomaSimple! From every keyboard, let freedom ring.

When we let freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all social groomers, PTs, chiropractors, osteopaths, massage therapists, hairdressers, surgeons, will be able to join hands and sing "Free at last! Free at last! Thanks, Barrett Dorko, we are free at last!"