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Greenwich Sports Medicine Puts ART on Local Map



Contributed photos

Olympic hurdler Yvonne Harrison, receives ART from Dr. Kerry Miller, a recent hire at Greenwich Sports Medicine. There are few ART practitioners in Fairfield County.



BY NICOLE RIVARD
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"I am like a new specimen," gushed Olympic 400-meter hurdler Yvonne Harrison, the Puerto Rican national record holder. She couldn't contain the excitement in her voice as she spoke with the *Greenwich Citizen* recently, just a couple of days before hopping on a plane heading from New York to Illinois where she resides.

At home, she will begin running full time again in preparation for a race in April, her first big event post surgery. Then it's on to the World Track and Field Championships next year followed by the 2008 Olympics.

"You don't understand. It's just been so frustrating to be injured for the past two years, and now I think the injuries will stop because we got to the root of the problem," Harrison said.

The "we" in reference was to Dr. Gil Chimes, clinical director of Greenwich Sports Medicine, and the facility's recently hired treating physician, Dr. Kerry Miller. They are fully credentialed in Active Release Techniques (ART), which Harrison believes played a major role in making her feel like new.

As an ART provider, Miller said that she breaks up a patient's scar tissue using her hands and patient motion, ultimately restoring proper function and improving range of motion and flexibility.

She explained that the body produces scar tissue from muscular imbalances and repetitive stress over time. Pulls, tears, accumulation of small tears and lack of oxygen can also lead to scar tissue.

As scar tissue builds up, muscles become shorter and weaker, tension on tendons causes tendonitis and nerves often become trapped. This can cause reduced range of motion, loss of strength and pain. If a nerve is trapped people may also feel tingling, numbness and weakness. There are more than 500 specific moves unique to ART. Miller said an ART session typically lasts 10-15 minutes and patients usually get an average of eight to 10 treatments.

Few Practitioners in County

Although ART was patented in 1988 by Colorado chiropractor Michael Leahy, there are few local practitioners. A search on the ART Web site at www.activerelease.com revealed only one other provider in Fairfield County, a Dr. Sid McCauley in Fairfield.

Miller explained that she became certified after participating in a three-day seminar. (They are offered once a month in locations across the United States.)

"They offer three courses to get full body certified — an upper-extremity course, a lower-extremity course and then a spine course. Each course has a specific number of protocols that they teach you. It's hands-on learning. At the end of each seminar, they test your technique and your knowledge of the protocols.

"The courses are expensive to take, so that limits who can sign up for them."

For a treatment that has been around 18 years, it's still comparatively unknown to the public, but that's changing, according to Miller.

"A lot of professional sports teams have ART doctors now. It's starting to become more mainstream in terms of chiropractors using it now.

"I think everyone is starting to realize that the soft tissue component of injuries was often overlooked, so they started integrating this technique."

Harrison said she travels from Illinois to see Chimes because she hasn't been able to find anyone of his caliber in her state. She stays with family in New York while she is going through her treatment regimen.

She said had never been exposed to ART before. For her, massage therapy was too general and did not get to the area where her scar tissue was.

"I love ART," Harrison declared. "It's specific and gets exactly to where the root of the problem is. We got to the bottom of why I was having those major injuries.

"As athletes we break down so many tissues and cells everyday you have to get that treatment to let your body build itself back up again. But not everybody does ART. You have to go to specific places in the states just to get it done."

Harrison also receives other treatments, including acupuncture, at Greenwich Sports Medicine.

"Our system is a functional integrative therapy system. We incorporate tissue treat-

ment with joint mechanics and adjusting, acupuncture to relax and strengthen muscles, as well as laser therapy. We find we get better results in combination, depending

on the injury," Miller said.

When it is deemed appropriate, patients are also introduced to a specialized exercise program, which is meant to reestablish proper strength in specific muscles and appropriate flexibility in others. (High-performance training and weight loss programs for athletes are also offered at the facility.) Helping people establish proper joint motion allows the trainers at Greenwich Sports Medicine to actually teach them how to move correctly, which prevents the reoccurrence of injury.

A Match Made in Paris

Harrison's relationship with Chimes started at World Championships in Paris four years ago. He treated her hamstring, which she had pulled in two places. Two years ago she had a partially torn meniscus and a massive scar tissue beneath the patella tendon in the kneecap. She knew she had to have surgery, but wanted to compete in the 2004 Olympics in Athens first without making her injuries worse, which she accomplished with the help of Chimes.

She's about nine months post surgery now. In addition to rehabilitation and post physical therapy, ART, laser therapy, acupuncture and weight training, the doctors at Greenwich Sports Medicine have also worked with her on her biomechanics by videotaping her while she runs and making suggestions.

"Oh my God, and I am just like a new person right now," said Harrison. "I feel great. The scar tissue is almost gone. My mechanics are much better.

"It's time to go. I'm ready to train and compete."

Greenwich SportsMedicine co-owner Charles DeFrancesco will present a seminar "How ART Benefits Athletes and the Average Person" at 6 p.m. on March 22 and at 10:30 a.m. on March 23. Flexibility and common posture problems will be addressed.

Reserve a spot by e-mailing greenwich-sportsmedicine@nsn.com.

Business Snapshot

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