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## Treating Movement Patterns

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Dana Hemmingsen conducting the Functional Movement Screen on a client Photo provided

Three months ago, 27-year old Chris Porter was in constant pain from a degenerated disk in his back caused by years of snowboarding and weightlifting. Everything from playing softball with friends to gliding down snowy terrain left him bedridden for days. "I was in a ton of pain," he remembers, "I took at least eight ibuprofen a day."

Porter had seen several specialists and physical therapists, but nothing prescribed eased his discomfort or amended its cause. Porter decided he was "just too young to be feeling this way" and sought out local Functional Movement Screen Specialist Dana Hemmingsen.

Hemmingsen began Porter's treatment as he does with everybody: with a Functional Movement Screening (FMS) Test that rates the body's quality of movement. This test identifies specific asymmetries and limitations in basic movement patterns.

Hemmingsen knows the dangers of injury. At 14, he sustained a substantial leg injury and was forced to rehab himself in order to continue playing the sports he loved.

Years later, after a desk job at Chevron proved unfulfilling, he began unofficially coaching football players at Monte Vista High School. "A big part of why I do this is my son," said Hemmingsen, whose son now plays football for UC Davis. "He would get injured and I'd help him to understand his limitations so he could do corrective exercises and work through those injuries. And he overcame them."

Unlike more conventional tests designed to locate the problem, Functional Movement Screening (FMS) seeks the larger cause.

"So many athletes get so much training thrown on them that their muscular-skeletal system can't handle it. Frequently, the medical community treats only symptoms," Hemmingsen said. "But they don't

treat the movement pattern which caused it. Instead it's recurring visits, surgery or anti-inflammatory drugs. However, FMS focuses on the whole movement pattern of a body: your knee might hurt, but it's the inflexibility in your hip that causes it."

"It was interesting to see where I really was," said Porter, whose screening test revealed he had exceptionally weak hips in addition to his compromised back. "But Dana's good about not letting you get too down on yourself."

Since Porter's first screen, he has followed Hemmingsen's rehabilitation and strengthening program which he described as "methodical" and "progressive." Now, he is no longer in pain and enjoys an active lifestyle again.

In April of this year, the Vallejo Firefighters joined the San Francisco 49ers, the Oakland Raiders and the US Military in implementing FMS department-wide. Captain Ray Jackson said his decision was based on various studies that show FMS cuts on-the-job injuries. One study, published in the Journal of Occupational Medicine and Toxicology in 2007, demonstrated a 62 percent reduction lost work time due to injury as well as 42 percent reduction in injuries themselves. The test was conducted over a 12-month period on 433 fire fighters in Tempe, AZ.

Jackson said it's too early to see any major differences in his department but believes the individualized and tailored nature of the screening makes it a beneficial tool.

Jackson admitted he notices small improvements: "I'm an athletic guy, but I had this tightness in my hip when bent down to put my left sock on." He paused, as if revealing a secret. "Now, I don't feel tightness anymore."

"I just want to help people," said Hemmingsen. "I want everyone to get the most out of their training."

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