

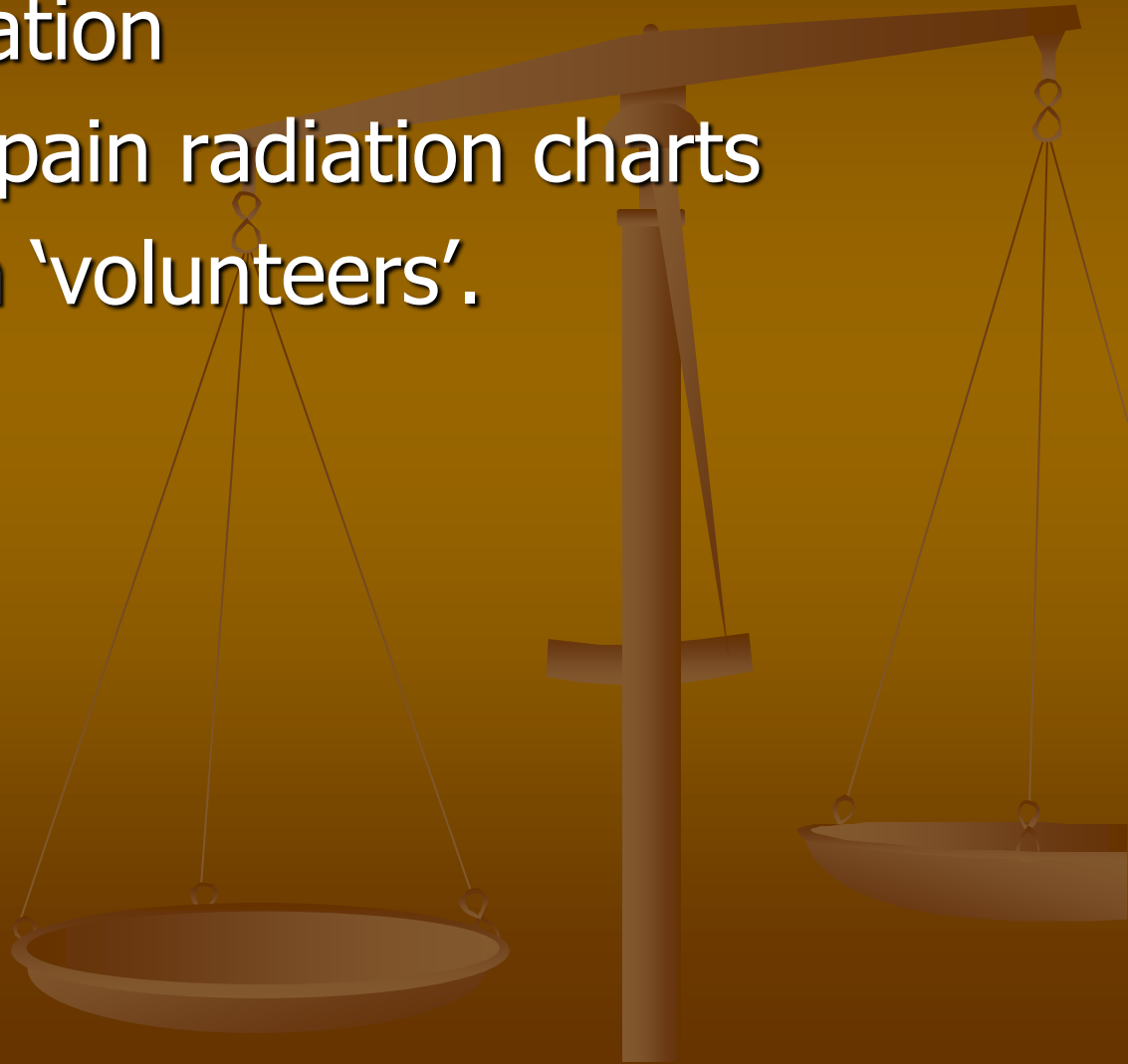
# Trigger Point Needling Workshop



Dr John Apps  
GP Westport

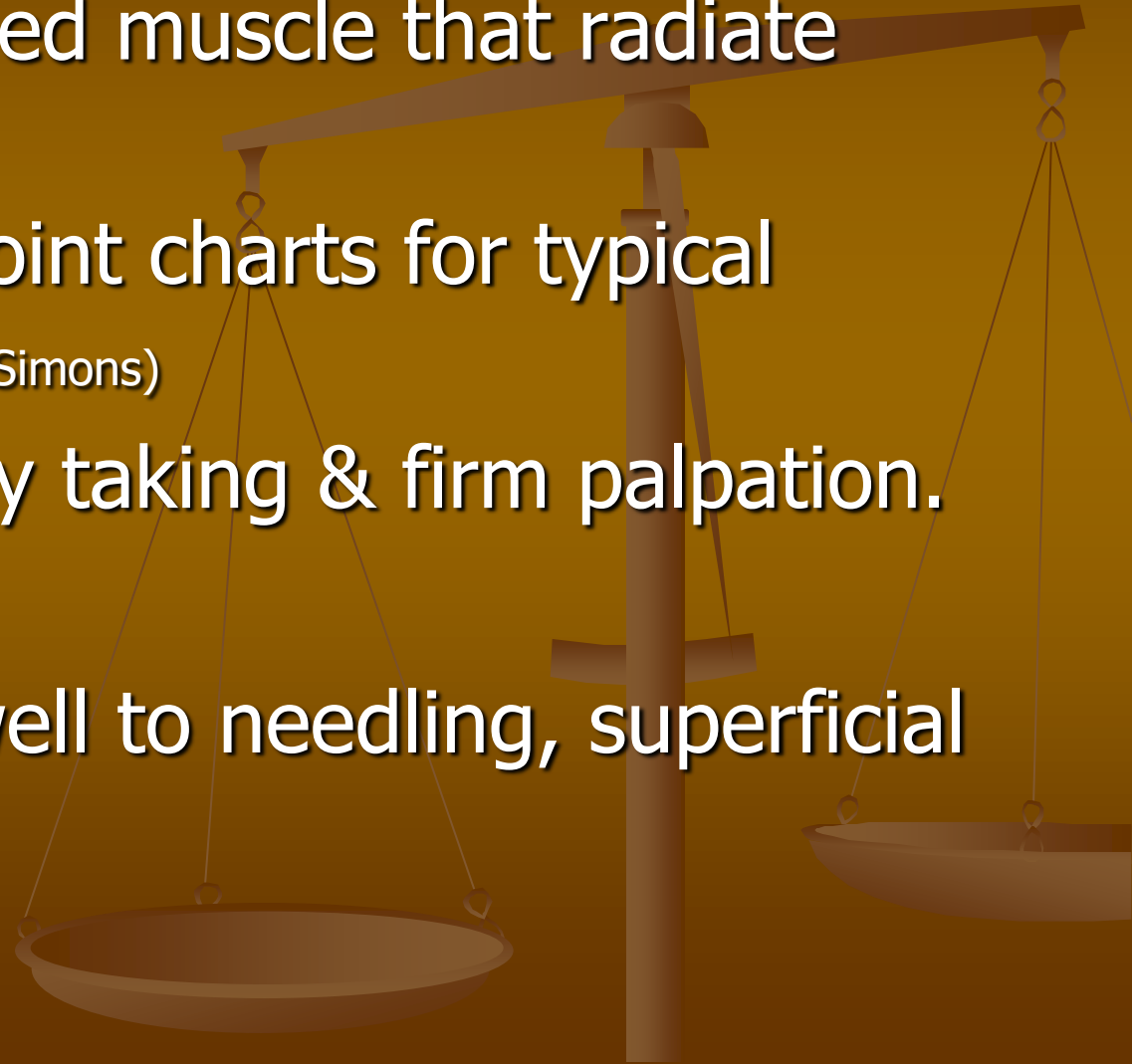
# Plan

- V short presentation
- Look at muscle pain radiation charts
- Demonstrate on 'volunteers'.



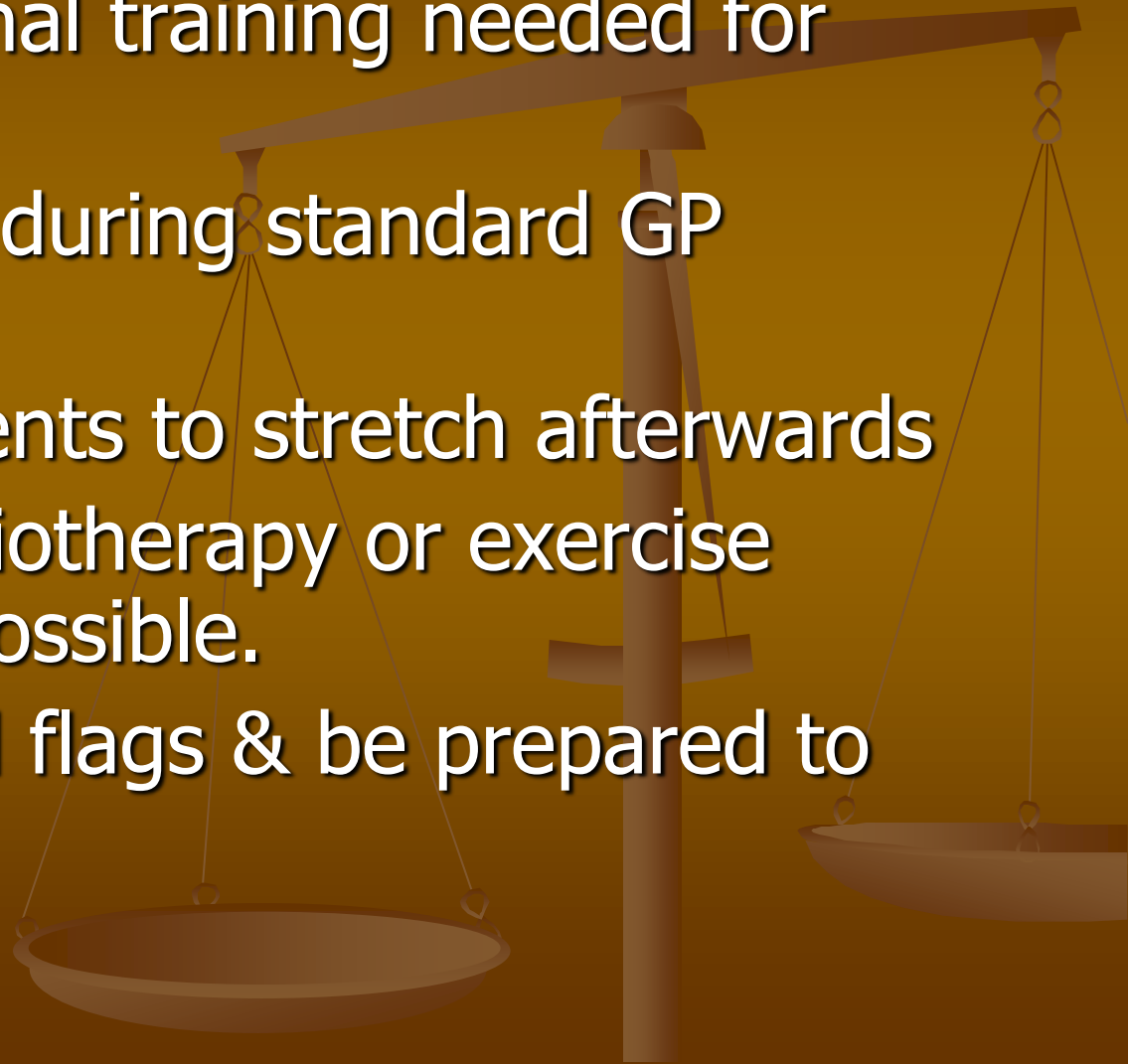
# Trigger points

- Areas of damaged muscle that radiate pain.
- Check trigger point charts for typical patterns. (Travell & Simons)
- Found by history taking & firm palpation.
- “Ah Shi” points.
- Respond very well to needling, superficial vs deep.



# Trigger points

- Minimal additional training needed for doctors.
- Rapidly treated during standard GP consultation
- Encourage patients to stretch afterwards
- Work with physiotherapy or exercise programme if possible.
- Be aware of red flags & be prepared to change course.

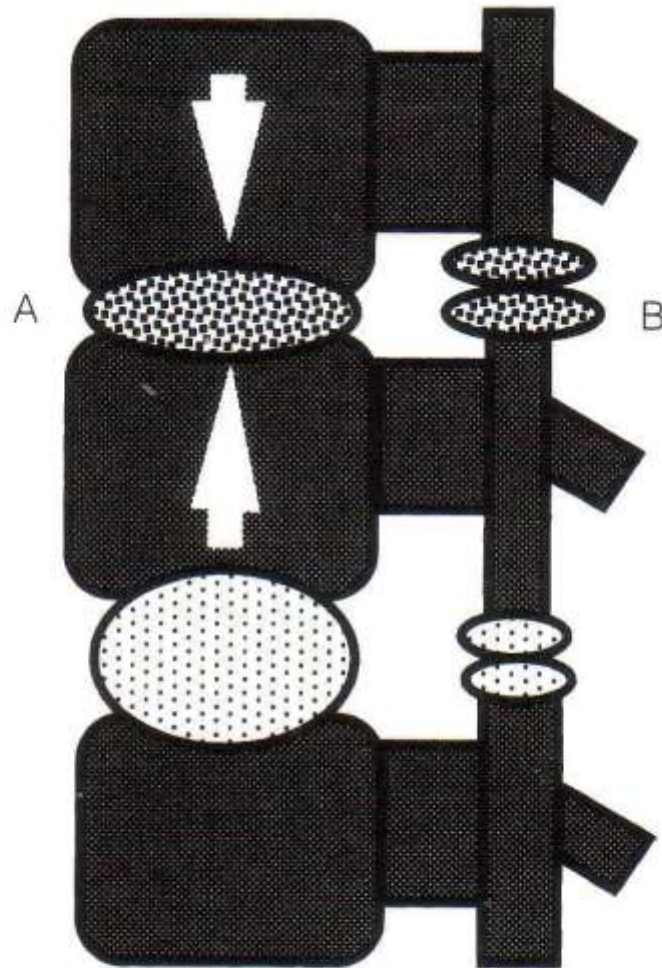


Very portable



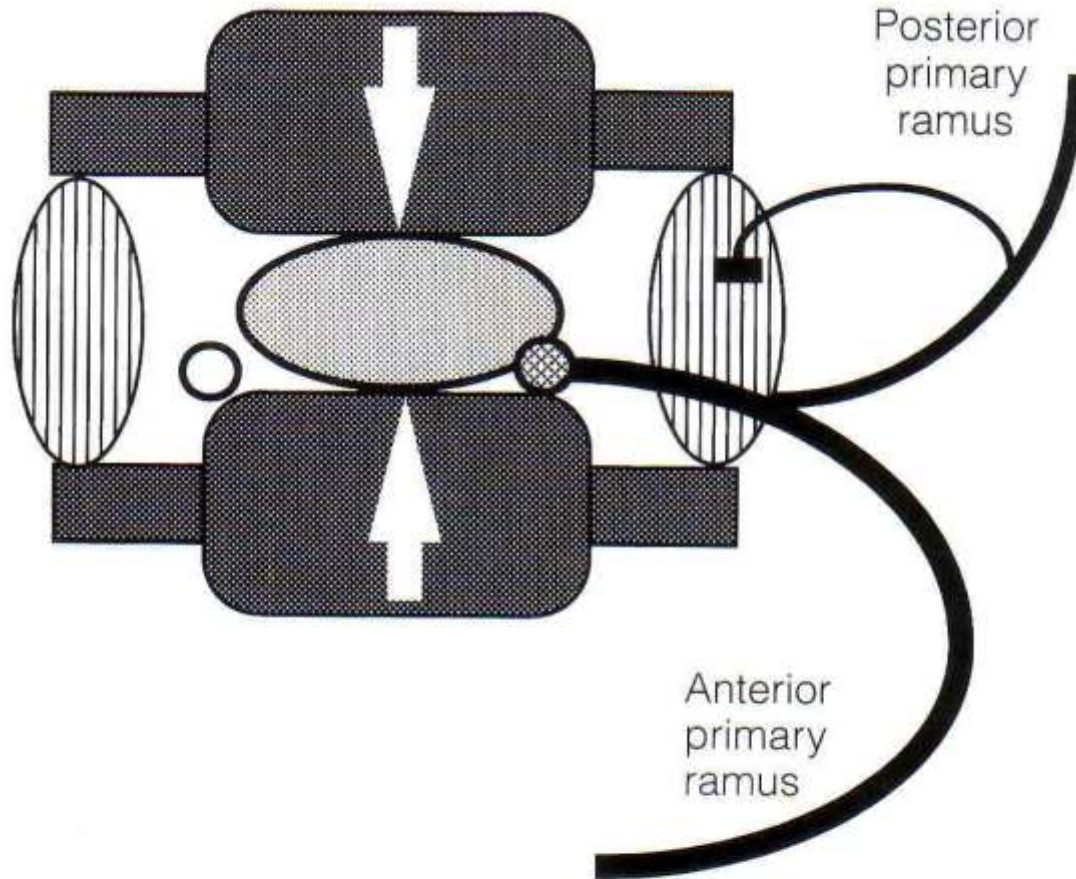
# Intramuscular Stimulation

- Diagnosis & Treatment of myofascial pain conditions. (Chan Gunn)
  - Often have a neuropathic/radicular aspect
  - Concept of shortened muscle causing secondary pain by mechanically stressing muscle attachments: bicipital tendonitis, lateral epicondylitis, disc compression etc
  - Use needle as diagnostic tool.
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When muscles across a disc shorten, they compress it (A), and at the same time, cause arthralgia in the facet joints (B).





Shortened intrinsic back muscles have compressed the disc and impinged on the nerve root. The irritated root further shortens muscles in both rami, thus further irritating the nerve root.

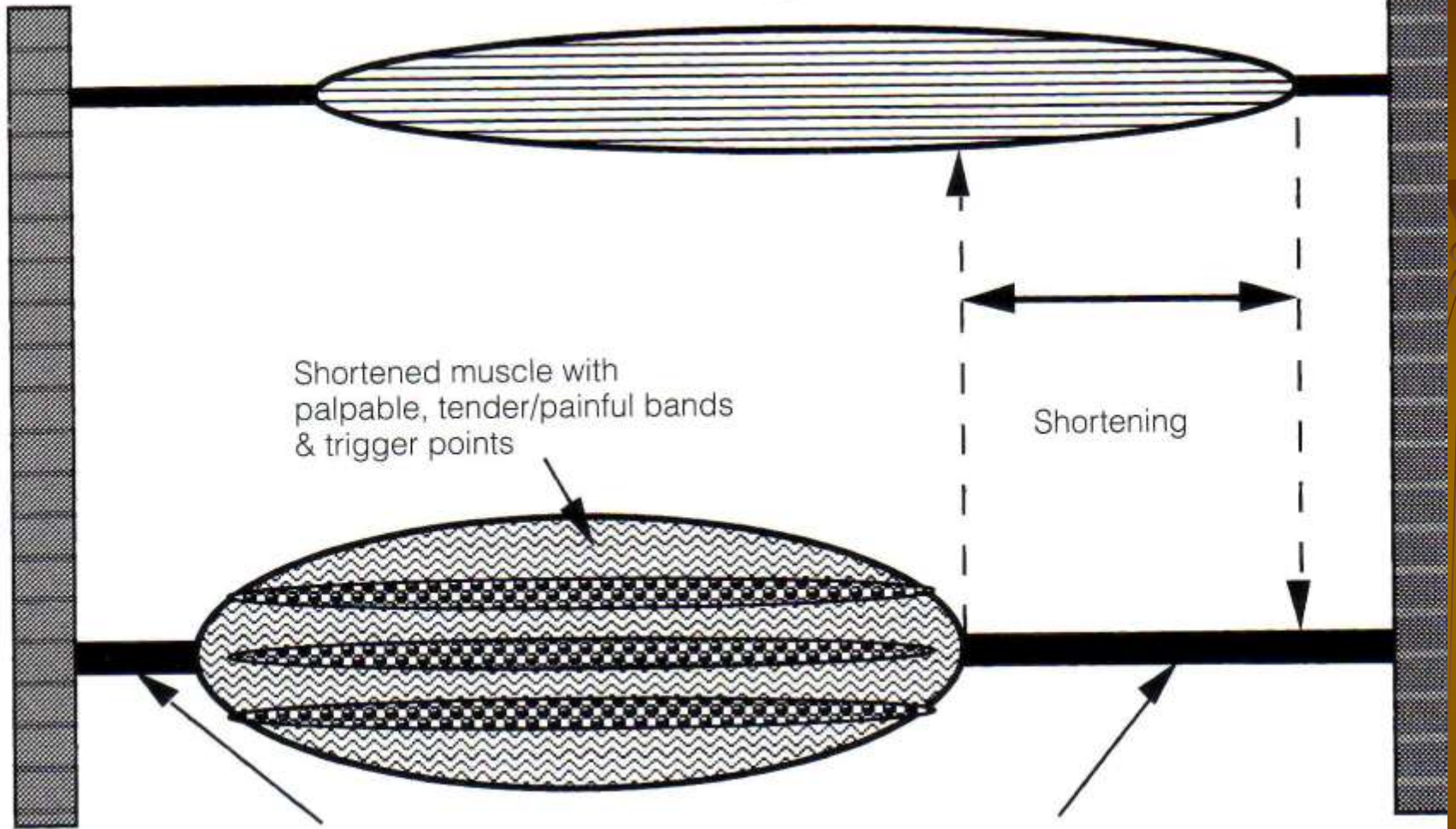


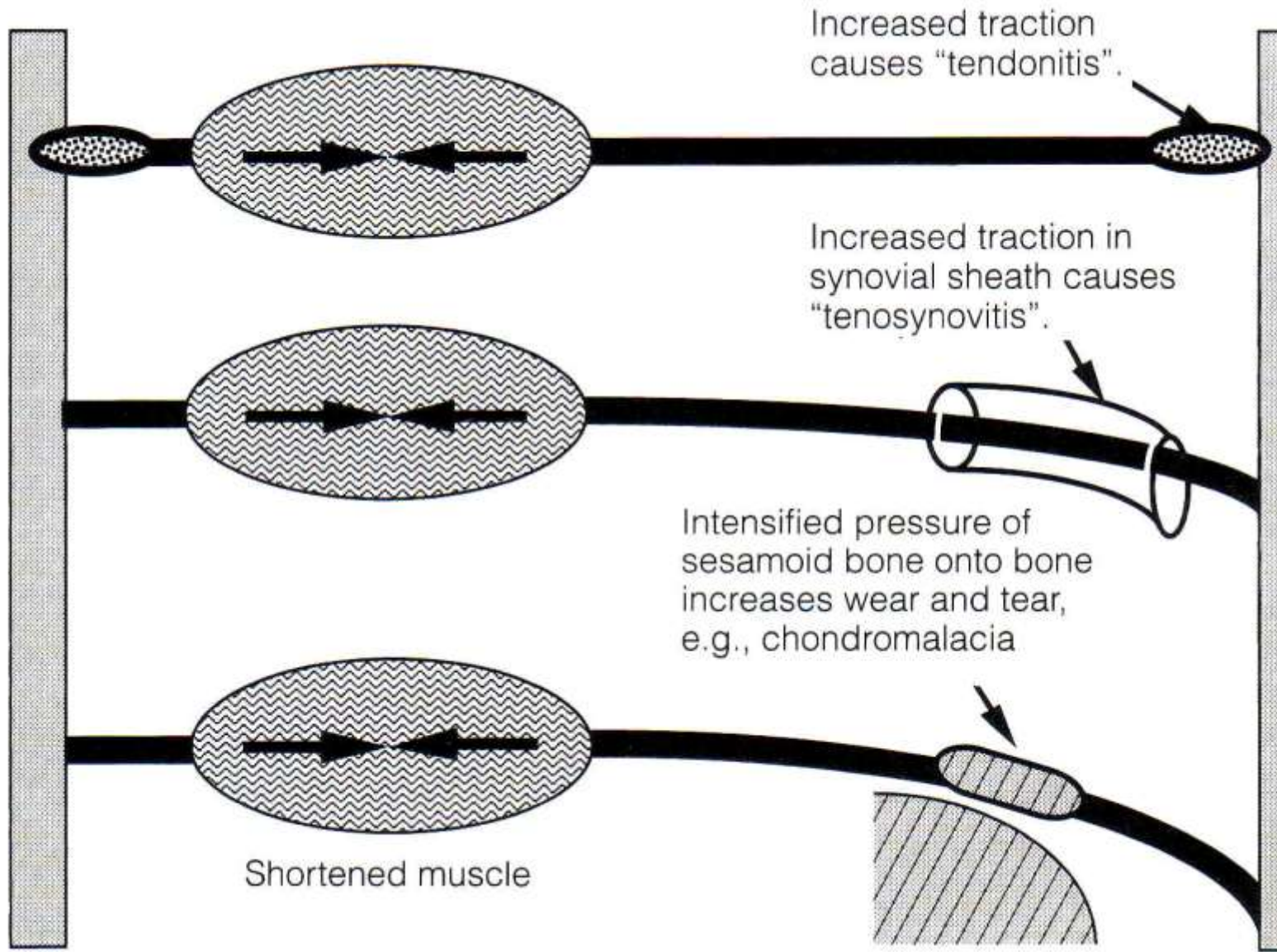
Normal muscle

Shortened muscle with palpable, tender/painful bands & trigger points

Shortening

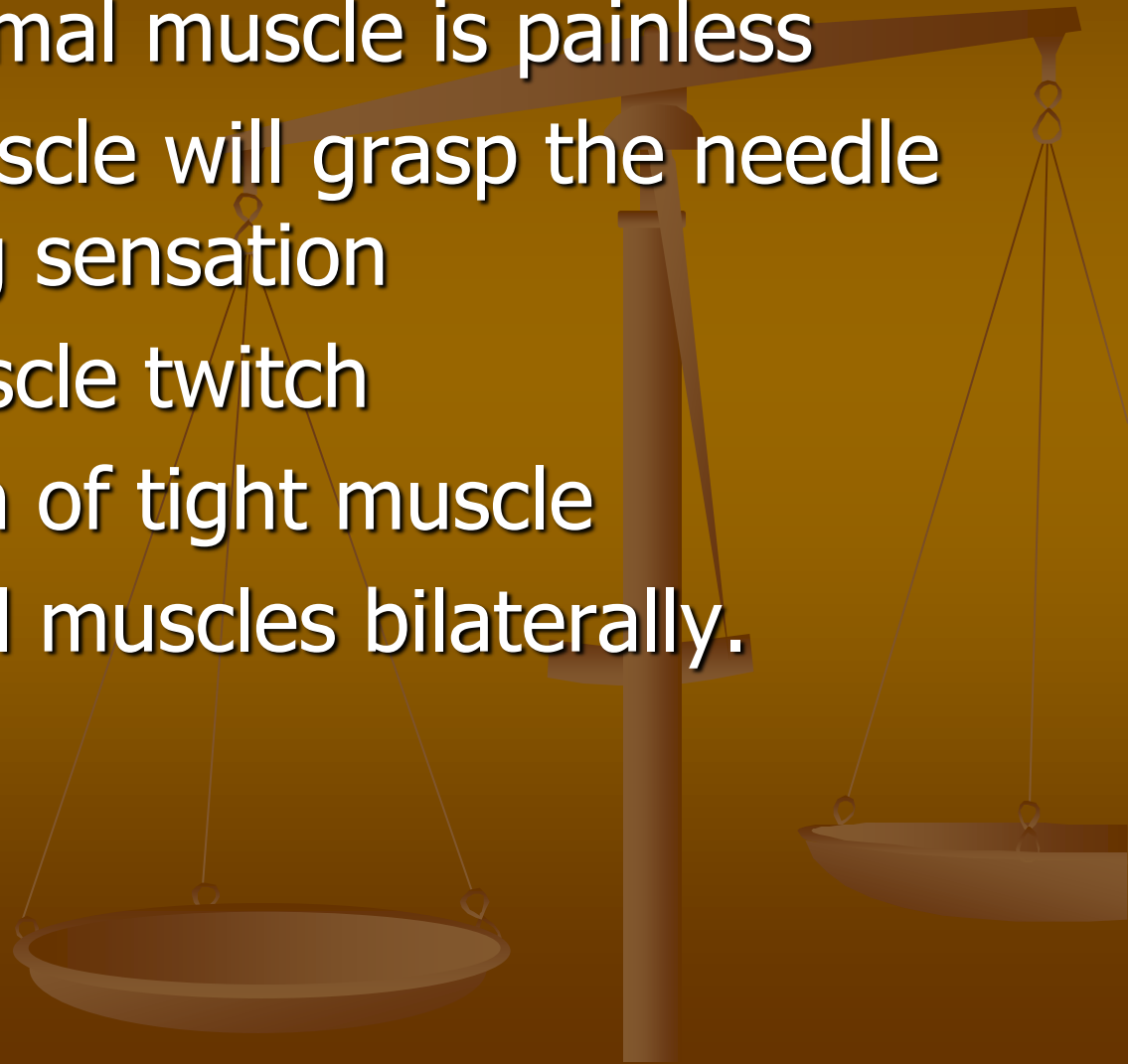
Enthesopathic (thickened) tendons





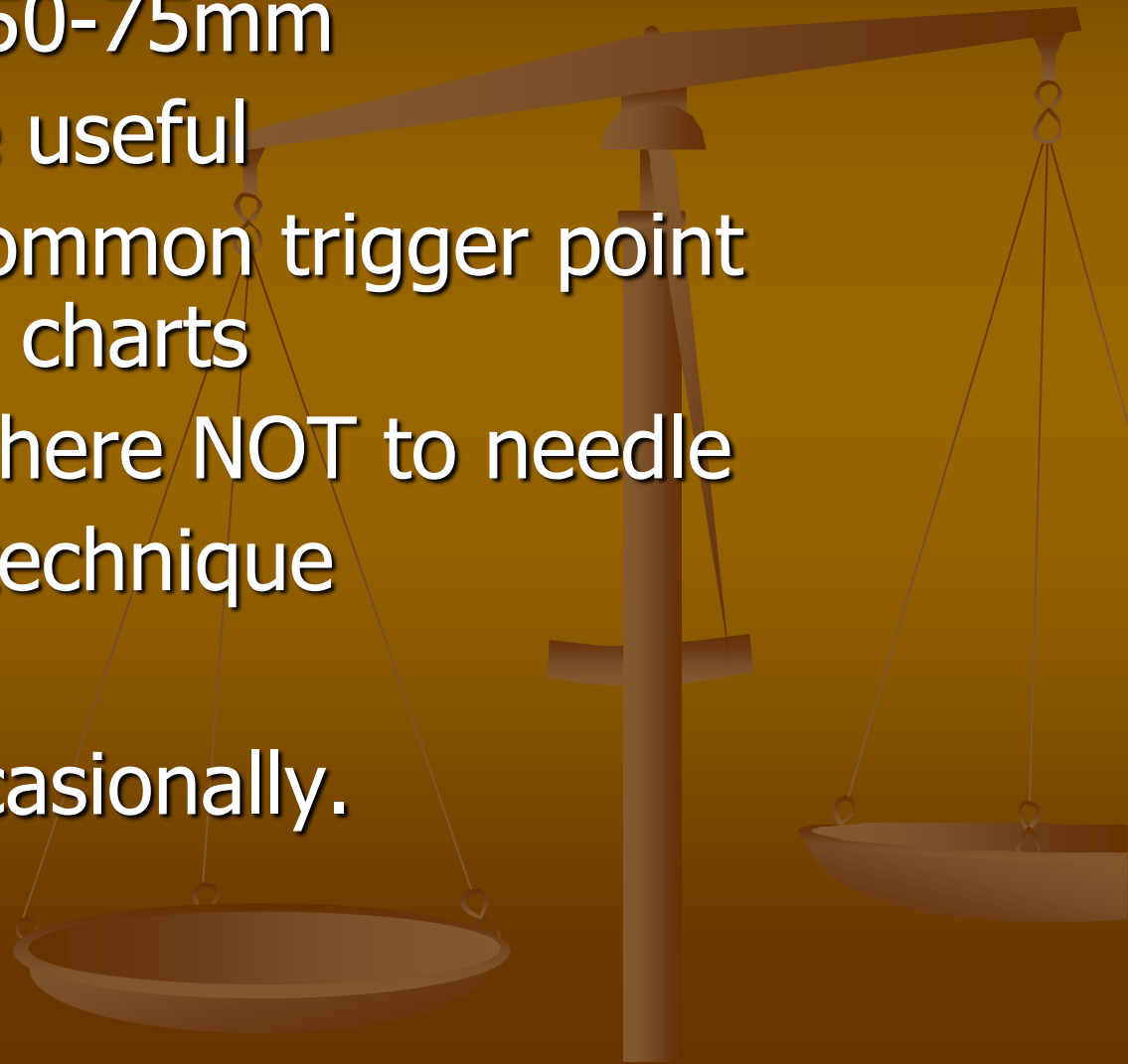
# Intramuscular Stimulation

- Needling of normal muscle is painless
- a shortened muscle will grasp the needle with a cramping sensation
- Often get a muscle twitch
- Rapid relaxation of tight muscle
- Treat paraspinal muscles bilaterally.



# What you need

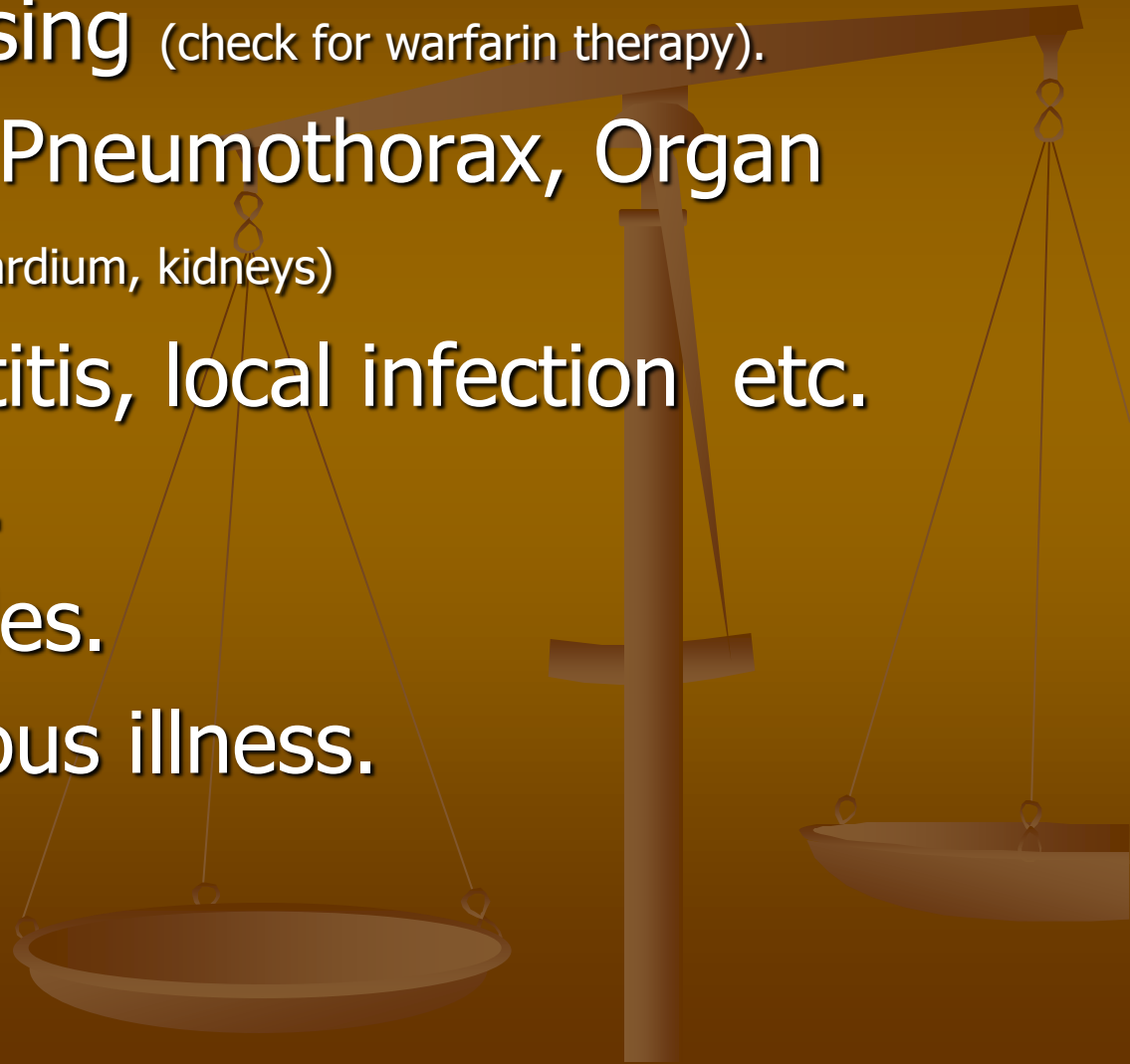
- Needles 30-40-50-75mm
- Guide tubes are useful
- Awareness of common trigger point radiation + wall charts
- Awareness of where NOT to needle
- Firm palpation technique
- Couch
- Cotton wool occasionally.





# Hazards

- Bleeding & bruising (check for warfarin therapy).
- Areas to avoid: Pneumothorax, Organ penetration (pericardium, kidneys)
- Infection: hepatitis, local infection etc.
- Broken needles.
- Forgotten needles.
- Masking of serious illness.

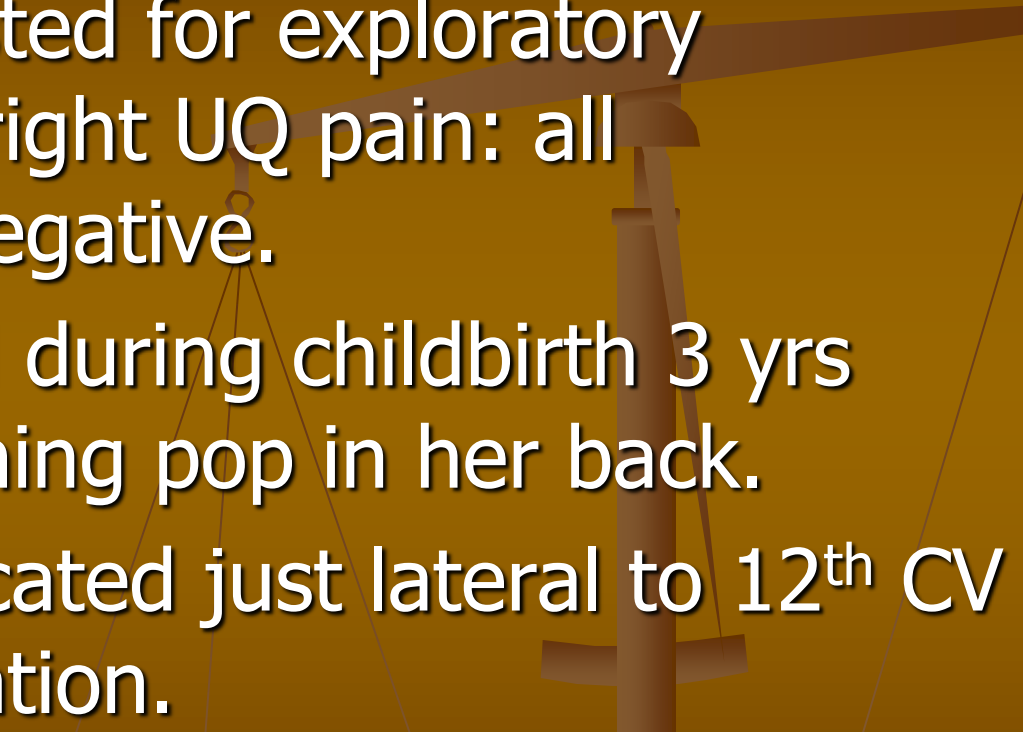


# How does it work?

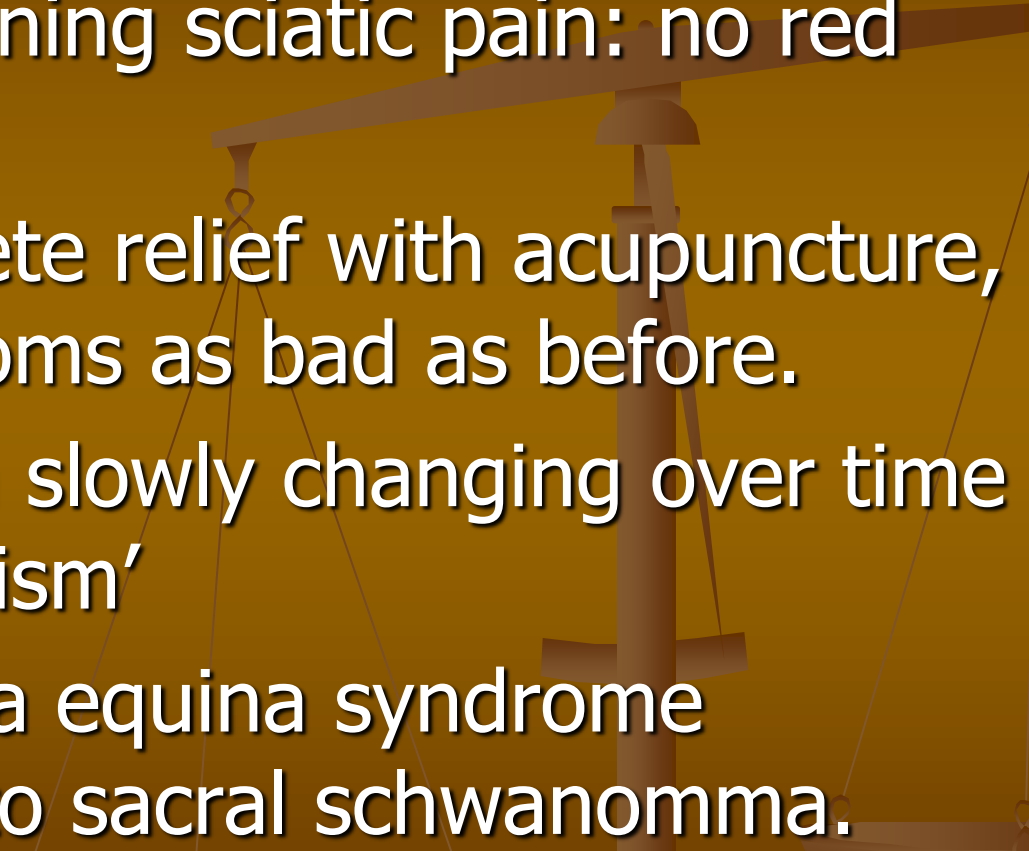
- Next question please!
- Chronic Pain with established pain circuit: Fine needle preferentially stimulates certain nerve fibre that sends pain inhibition signals via relays in spinal cord & brain.
- Acute muscular pain with muscular damage & shortening: fine needle inserted into muscle causes muscle to relax, takes strain off related ligaments, joints, discs, improves micro-circulation which dispels accumulated toxins.
- Placebo/Physician Effect



# Cases

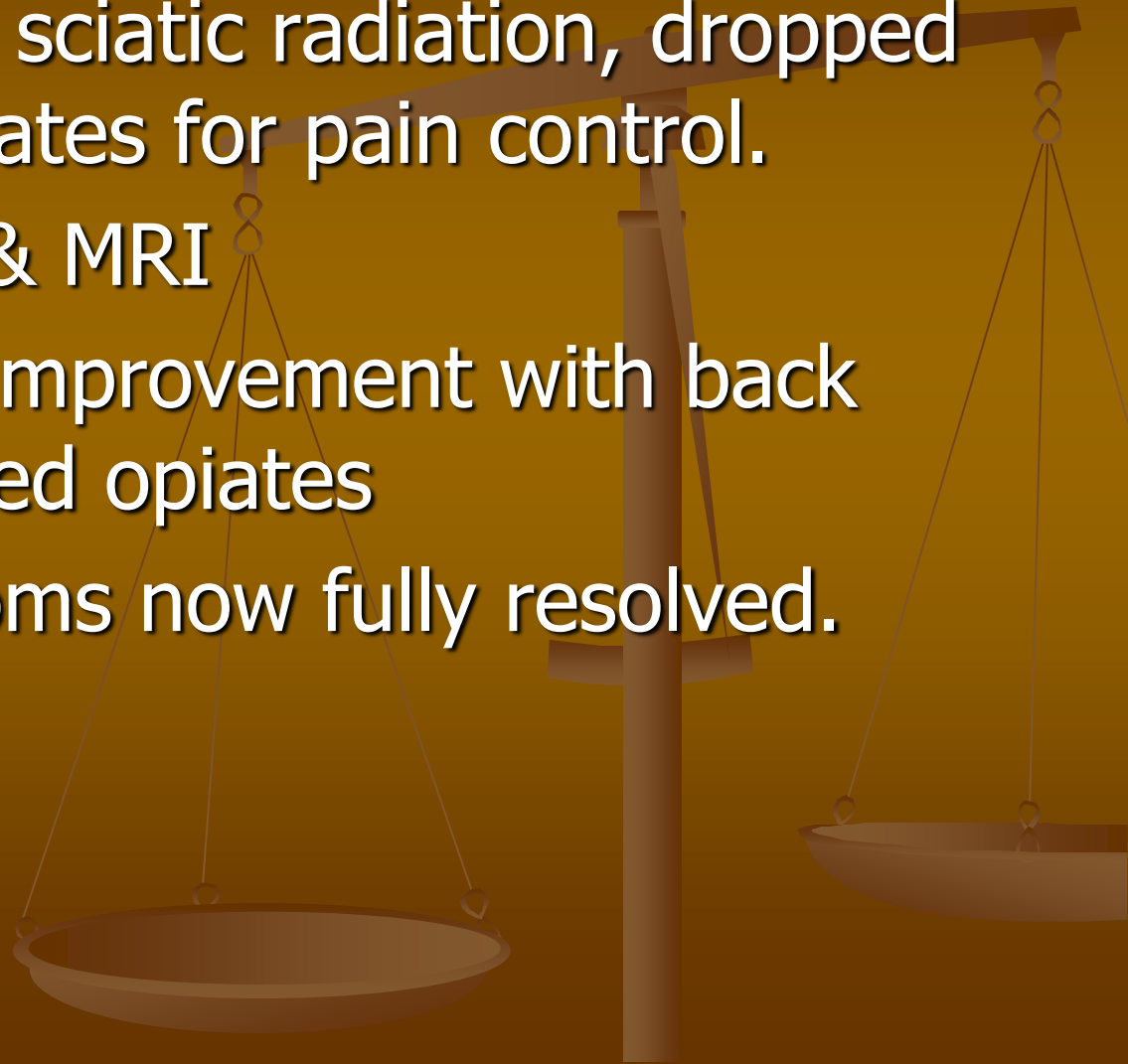
- Female 35yrs listed for exploratory laparotomy for right UQ pain: all investigations negative.
  - Hx: pain started during childbirth 3 yrs ago: felt something pop in her back.
  - Trigger point located just lateral to 12<sup>th</sup> CV jt on deep palpation.
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# Cases

- 49yr with worsening sciatic pain: no red flags.
  - 2-3 days complete relief with acupuncture, but then symptoms as bad as before.
  - Pain distribution slowly changing over time + 'slight prostatism'
  - Eventually cauda equina syndrome diagnosed due to sacral schwannoma.
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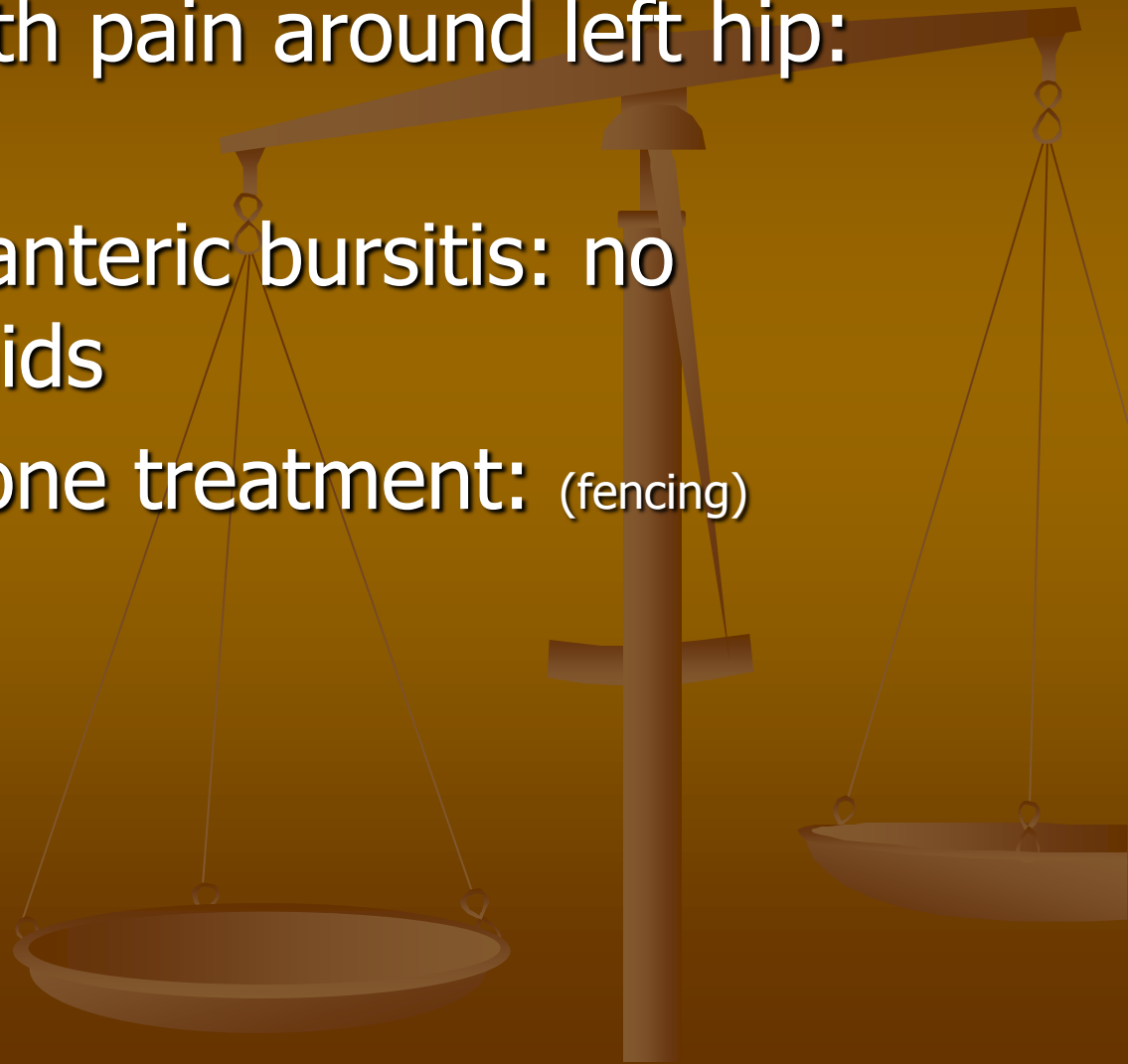
# Cases

- 52 yr male with sciatic radiation, dropped AJ. Needing opiates for pain control.
- Awaiting ortho & MRI
- 75% symptom improvement with back needling: stopped opiates
- Update: symptoms now fully resolved.

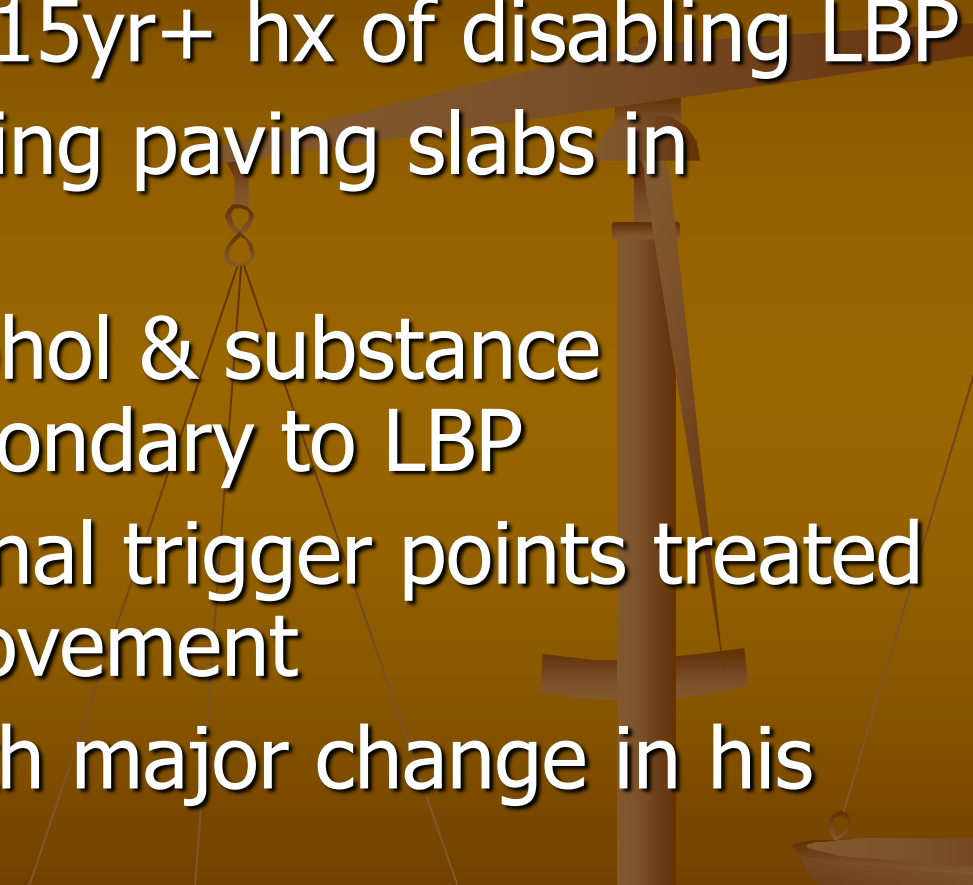


# Cases

- 68 yr female with pain around left hip: xrays normal
- Clinically: trochanteric bursitis: no response to nsaids
- Resolved after one treatment: (fencing)



# Cases

- 45 yr man with 15yr+ hx of disabling LBP
  - Started after lifting paving slabs in confined space
  - Medication, alcohol & substance dependancy secondary to LBP
  - Multiple paraspinal trigger points treated with great improvement
  - On-going Tx with major change in his attitude to life.
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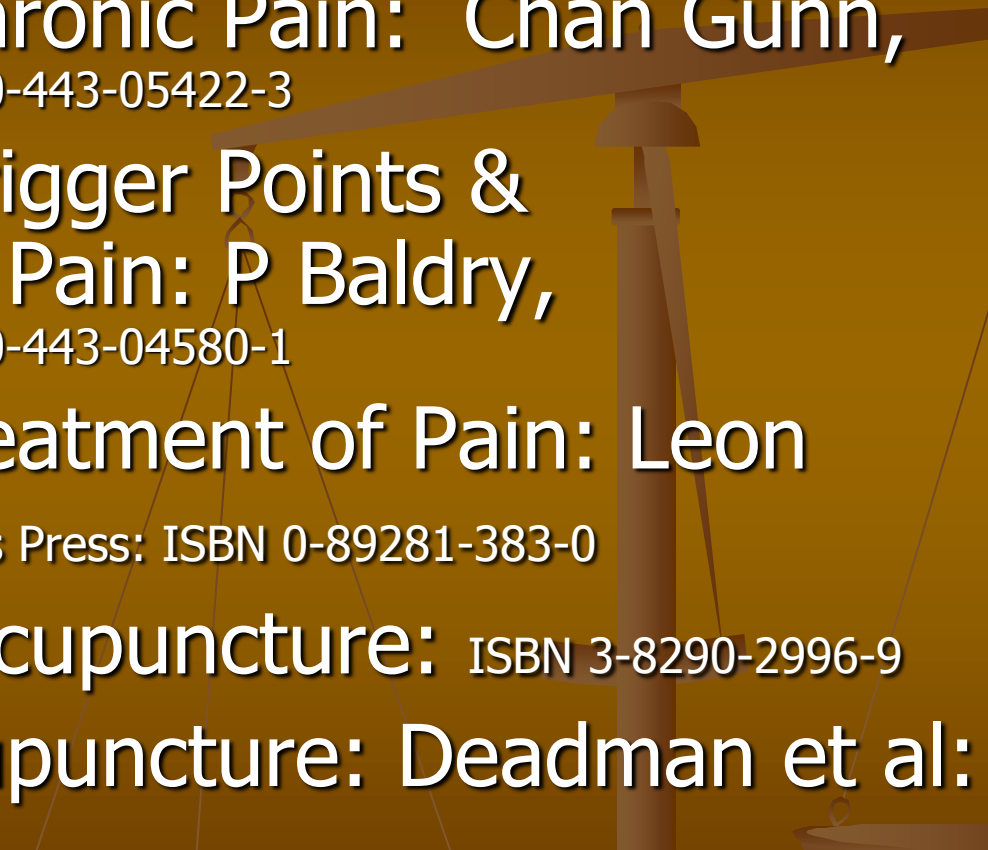
# Demonstration

- Trigger points
- Needles





# Useful Books

- **Treatment of Chronic Pain:** Chan Gunn,  
Churchill Livingstone: ISBN 0-443-05422-3
  - **Acupuncture, Trigger Points & Musculoskeletal Pain:** P Baldry,  
Churchill Livingstone: ISBN 0-443-04580-1
  - **Acupuncture Treatment of Pain:** Leon Chaitow,  
Healing Arts Press: ISBN 0-89281-383-0
  - **Seirin Atlas of Acupuncture:** ISBN 3-8290-2996-9
  - **A Manual of Acupuncture:** Deadman et al:  
ISBN 0-9510546-7-8
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# Web resources

- British Medical Acupuncture Society  
[www.medical-acupuncture.co.uk](http://www.medical-acupuncture.co.uk)
- NZ Acupuncture Standards Authority  
[www.nzasa.org](http://www.nzasa.org)

