

AquaStretch: Ride the New Tidal Wave in Aquatic Therapy

Jessica Huss PT, DPT

I have been providing aquatic therapy since I graduated with my Doctorate of Physical Therapy in 2002. I have always believed in the healing power of aquatic therapy due to the unique therapeutic atmosphere the water creates. However, I have never seen anything as effective as AquaStretch.

I first heard about AquaStretch on September 23rd, 2010 at an ATRI conference in Las Vegas, NV. Its creator was proclaiming that AquaStretch could alleviate frozen shoulder and fibromyalgia pain and stiffness in as little as 1-3 sessions. He also alleged profound first session results in the reduction of chronic pain and the ability to restore flexibility *years* after injuries and/or surgeries. All of his claims sounded outlandish! I was instantly intrigued.

Immediately following the September 2010 convention I trained in AquaStretch at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) Wellness Center. The training took place at the UNLV pool where patients and clients were eagerly willing to donate their bodies for future AquaStretch facilitators. Upon witnessing the unbelievable results, I became a believer in AquaStretch. Indeed, the participants were ecstatic with their results. My aquatic therapy practice significantly changed.

I took my newly-developed AquaStretch skills back to Lake Havasu City, AZ. Without delay, I applied the technique to my patients and could not believe the overwhelming response. For example, a patient with multiple spinal fusions reported she was able to sleep through the night for the first time in 4 years ***after just one AquaStretch session***. Moreover, other patients who suffered from stiff joints for up to 20 years sang praise after AquaStretch alleviated their condition in a mere 5 to 10 minutes. Multiple patients demonstrated twice as much improvement in their Range of Motion (“ROM”) measurements during their total knee rehabilitation as compared to land-based treatments. In addition, patients reported significant improvements in pain reduction and use of pain medications. In a short period of time, nearly all my patients were demanding AquaStretch as part of their treatment program. My patients have thanked me over and over again for helping them. Here is what one woman wrote in response to her treatment:

- “What you accomplished in alleviating severe pain and helping my overall well-being is nothing short of a miracle. Now I am more mobile, more pain free and my balance has certainly improved. –even my hips and back hurt far less” ...“Your approach and hands on water therapy is very different than traditional therapy and is far more effective”.
- “I thank you from the bottom of my heart and want to let you know that the improvement in my mobility and having so much less pain has given me a new lease on life. For the first time in many years I feel hopeful again and it is all because of you [AquaStretch]”.

- “If only there was a way that all the people that have been diagnosed with fibromyalgia, arthritis, polymyalgia rheumatic and other debilitating muscle diseases could participate in your water therapy. It might not cure the diseases but the quality of life can be certainly improved. I am living proof of that”.

AquaStretch is a breakthrough in aquatic therapy, pain management and physical medicine. It often succeeds when other traditional treatments have failed. In addition, the benefits have been reported to last up to 3 to 4 times longer. Immediately, I realized it blew all other techniques (i.e., aquatic and land based procedures) right out of the water! (Or should I say “into the water?”) AquaStretch reigns supreme in improving ROM and decreasing pain. No other treatment compares (i.e, ultrasound, mobilizations, traditional manual and aquatic therapy techniques). My patients are demanding AquaStretch because of its immediate and profound results. They are also experiencing much less “treatment-induced” pain and a quicker overall recovery from their injuries.

There is a wide-based application for AquaStretch. As mentioned, AquaStretch assists in physical therapy. It has also demonstrated *fantastic* results in the area of fitness and wellness. Indeed, AquaStretch has been reported to be more effective than massage, and to enhance recreational sports performance. For example, several clients have claimed the ability to drive a golf ball 20 to 30 yards farther after only one session; another client reported to have improved a half-marathon time by 5 minutes! In addition, clients have stated that AquaStretch reduces the intensity and duration of muscle soreness from intensive training. Specifically, clients have reported a reduction of duration of muscle soreness from 48 to 12 hours.

AquaStretch works to quickly and easily release adhesions (calcifications in the connective tissue called fasciae) by the combination of warm water, buoyancy, stretch resistance and “intuitive movement”. This allows the body to obtain and sustain stretch positions and movements not achievable on land. The results are amazing!

AquaStretch differs from other aquatic and stretching procedures in 2 ways. First, the AquaStretch patient is encouraged and given permission to actively participate by being asked to: “Move, if you feel the need to move.” This differs from traditional treatments where the patient remains passive while receiving treatment. Active participation by the client removes the expectation of being “done” by the therapist, which may inhibit a person’s natural need to move and stretch. Second, AquaStretch differs from other forms of aquatic therapy by applying stretch resistance. Weights of 5 to 15 lbs. are attached to the body to obtain a deep fascial stretch in positions not possible on land. Stretch resistance may also be varied by changing the depth of water, and/or varying the facilitator’s pressure.

If you answer yes to either of the following questions, it is worthwhile for you to try AquaStretch:

1. Do you have chronic pain more than 3 months after an injury or surgery?
2. Do pain medications, chiropractic adjustments, or massage only provide short term relief?

If you are interested in becoming an AquaStretch facilitator, you may take introductory courses from ATRI (www.atri.org) or more comprehensive individualized skilled development courses at the Aquatic Rehab & Wellness Center in Lake Havasu City, AZ (480 217 9433) and/or at the UNLV Wellness Center in Las Vegas, NV (702 733 8476). Continuing education credit has been approved by the American Council

on Education (ACE) for “AquaStretch for the Fitness Trainer” and by the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork .

Nothing compares to this breakthrough in aquatic exercise. Since making its first splash on the aquatic scene, AquaStretch has proven to be a must know modality for aquatic therapists, physical therapists, massage therapists, fitness trainers and physical therapy assistants. Soon, AquaStretch will be accepted as the gold standard in aquatic therapy and as an indispensable fitness and wellness service.