

Influence of Rolfing Structural Integration on Active Range of Motion: A Retrospective Cohort Study

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J Clin Med. 2022 Oct 5;11(19):5878. doi: 10.3390/jcm11195878.

- PMID: [36233746](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36233746/)
- PMCID: [PMC9570915](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/PMC9570915/)
- DOI: [10.3390/jcm11195878](https://doi.org/10.3390/jcm11195878)

Abstract

Background: Recent work has investigated significant force transmission between the components of myofascial chains. Misalignments in the body due to fascial thickening and shortening can therefore lead to complex compensatory patterns. For the treatment of such nonlinear cause-effect pathology, comprehensive neuromusculoskeletal therapy such as the Rolf Method of Structural Integration (SI) could be targeted.

Methods: A total of 727 subjects were retrospectively screened from the medical records of an SI practice over a 23-year period. A total of 383 subjects who had completed 10 basic SI sessions met eligibility criteria and were assessed for active range of motion (AROM) of the shoulder and hip before and after SI treatment.

Results: Shoulder flexion, external and internal rotation, and hip flexion improved significantly (all $p < 0.0001$) after 10 SI sessions. Left shoulder flexion and external rotation of both shoulders increased more in men than in women ($p < 0.0001$) but were not affected by age.

Conclusions: An SI intervention could produce multiple changes in the components of myofascial chains that could help maintain upright posture in humans and reduce inadequate compensatory patterns. SI may also affect differently the outcome of some AROM parameters in women and men.