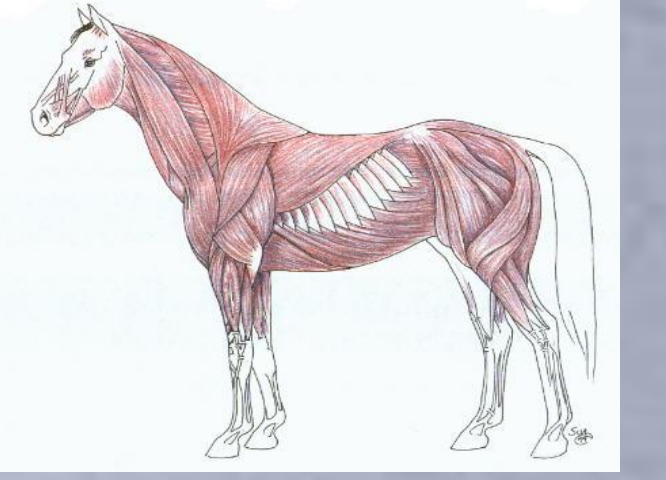


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Aim: To test a treatment protocol that uses Swedish Massage techniques to address restricted range of motion in a horse hindquarters.



Background:

The purpose of this research was to investigate whether Swedish Massage techniques can have an effect on a horse's range of motion by examining the changes in range of motion through the hindquarters¹.

It is recognized that as the research was a single case study design, results are limited in breadth although a protocol has been developed for further research.

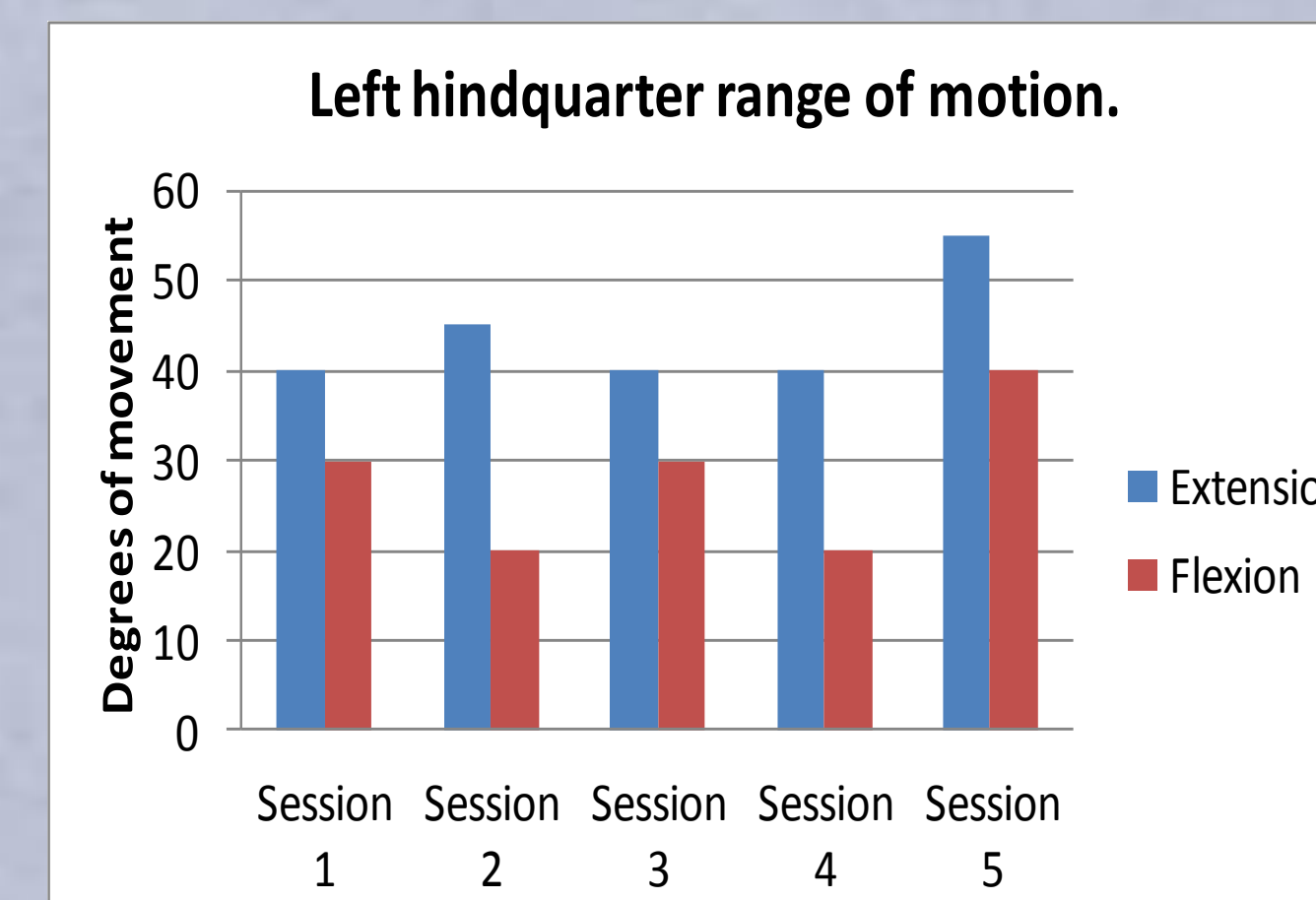
Ethical approval was granted for this research project by the Southern Institute of Technology School of Health, Exercise & Recreation Ethics Committee.

Method:

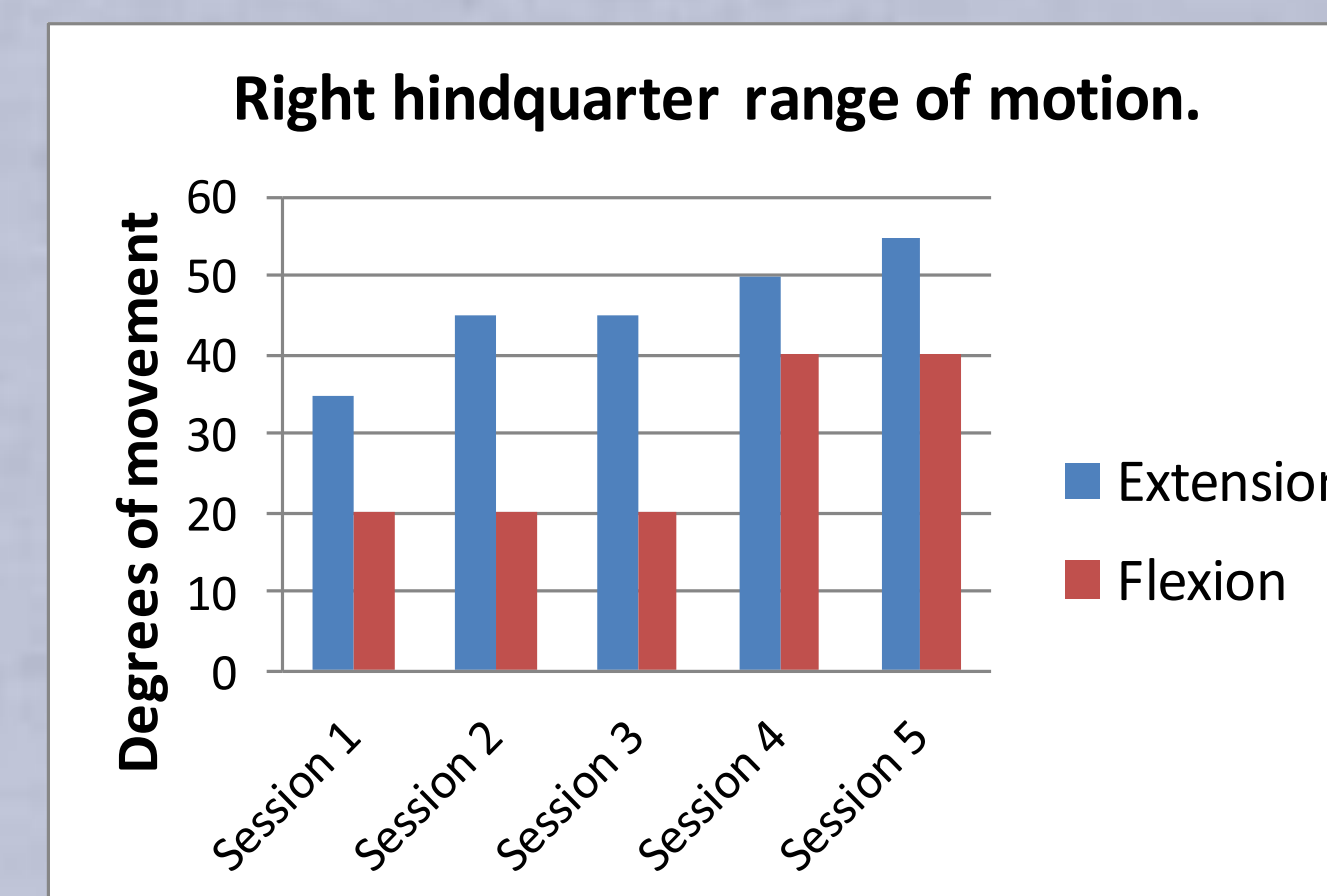
A single case study was conducted on an eight year old Arabian cross bred horse that was free from injury.

Five treatment sessions were completed. Each session involved: a five minute walk for the horse prior to treatment, range of motion testing of the hindquarters, and the application of effleurage, compression and cross fiber friction massage techniques to the hindquarters. The average duration of the treatment sessions was one hour. The researcher applied the massage protocol to their own horse, with the purpose of this being to assure the horse's safety. The researcher understood the horse's unique characteristics prior to the treatment. By the researcher testing the protocol on their own horse this allowed the horse to remain in its familiar environment to prevent the possibility of the horse becoming anxious.

Results:



The horse's range of motion in the left hind quarter varied throughout the five sessions. From the initial assessment to the fifth assessment, flexion of the left hind quarter increased by ten degrees while extension increased by fifteen degrees.



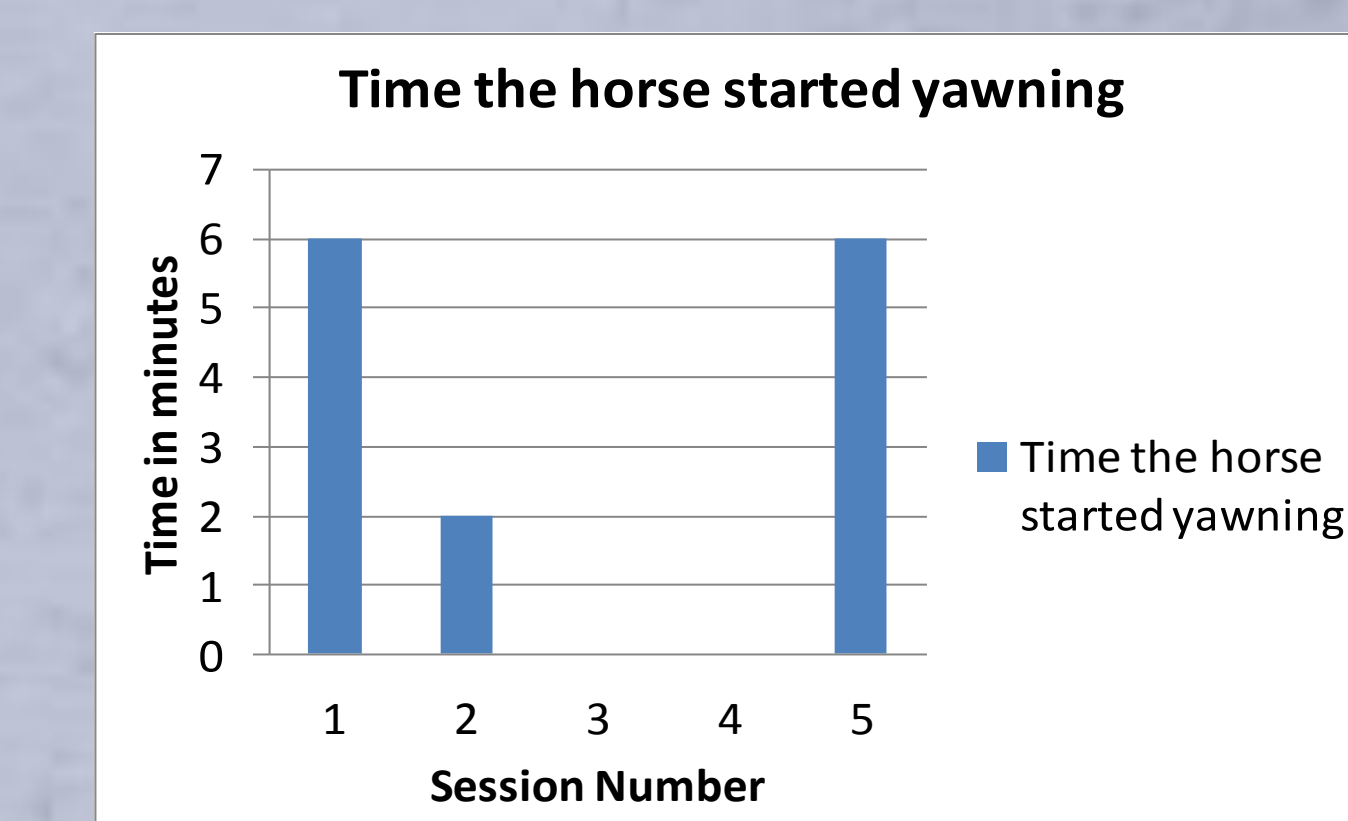
Range of motion in the horse's right hindquarter increased by the final session, for both flexion and extension. Flexion of the right hindquarter did not show any change until the fourth treatment. Flexion presented an overall twenty degree increase from the initial session, and extension increased gradually with a difference of twenty degrees being gained by final treatment.



Extension of the hindquarter.



Flexion of the hindquarter.



Yawning was a notable response to the massage treatment. The horse began yawning more frequently when fibrous muscle tissue was being deeply treated.

Other notable responses to the massage treatment included:

The horse moving into the pressure of the massage strokes. Bodily gases released from the horse. Positioning of the horse's ears. The horse would point its ears backwards when tender points were treated.



Yawning



Ears Back

Conclusion:

Results indicate that massage treatment does have an effect on a horse. This is indicated by the frequent yawning and passing of air from the horse. Swedish massage techniques may benefit a horse with limited range of motion in the hindquarters, however a series of treatments may be needed.

References:

Scott, M. & Swenson, L. A. (2009). Evaluating the Benefits of Equine Massage Therapy: A Review of the Evidence and Current Practices. *Journal of Equine Veterinary Science*, 29(9), 687-697.