

A SEASONAL CHAT...

...WITH **MS HELEN HOW** D.O.

Member of the Institute of Osteopathy and Osteopathic Sports Care Association

From riding bareback and eventing, to studying with some of the most respected names in the field. Helen did her training at the European School of Osteopathy, and has spent over thirty years building up her Osteopathy Practice. She serves everyone from the sporting elite to those of us who are happy just to remain good sports in life and work.

01: What first interested you in Sports Medicine?

I was born and raised in a healthy environment, on a farm where ponies and riding, and growing our own organic fruits and vegetables was a way of life. I was immersed in plenty of sporting activities. Fishing, riding, shooting sport and exercise was all part of a normal day. Physical activity and nature just guided me towards a growing interest in staying healthy.

02: How and when did you get your current job?

I think I've always tried to maintain a professional and personal balance, so I gravitated towards an occupation that involved keeping healthy and exercising. Osteopaths have always worked with sports, exercise, health and well being. It's part of our "hands on" training approach to healthcare, based on the principle that the way you move your body improves and maintains good health. As part of my own evolving continual education, it opens all kinds of different opportunities and levels of interest and personal development.

03: What is the best part of your job?

Working from a beautiful part of Edinburgh is an obvious bonus, but what really makes it best for me is the opportunity to pursue my enthusiasm for work and having enough time to be with my family as much as with my clients. Technically though, I really enjoy pioneering the use of shockwave therapy combined with rehabilitation of the muscular skeletal system. The use of shockwave therapy introduced a dramatic learning curve in discovering how many chronic painful injuries are still challenging to manage. However, there are promising outcomes. Thinking back to those days on the farm, looking after horses taught me that the natural rate of physiological process of healing of soft tissues couldn't be accelerated, and that self care and injury prevention is a core principle.

04: What is the worst part of your job?

Being one of the early adopters for the General Osteopathic Council, I'm certainly willing engage in a wide range of activities, workshops, and key areas of reflection communication and consent, with objective feedback. That always means a lot of paperwork and admin. I really endorse continuing professional and personal development, and that's a lot of paperwork too. If there was a way to stay totally up to date, and bring beneficial new ideas to everyone,

while getting out from under the admin mountain, I'd be very happy.

05: Who has most influenced in your professional life and why?

Well, right from childhood, I'll thank my family, who are all passionate about keeping fit and active and encouraging one to keep on learning. I must also mention Physiotherapist Cliff Eaton. When my son sustained a Tibial / Fibular Fracture it was Cliff who gave us excellent clinical support rehabilitation management. I also have to thank the very influential and supportive Professor Nicola Maffulli. He encouraged me to continue with the interest in sports and exercise. Lastly, I would like to mention Peter Alliss. I am not a golfer, but his fantastic communication skills, and encyclopaedic knowledge of the decades of unbelievable changes in the sport, make him an inspirational commentator for our BBC.

06: What do you do to relax?

It's nice to get away, out into the country and do a little horse riding. I don't own a horse in suburban Edinburgh, but one of the great things about this city is that it's very easy to reach the countryside. It's a release from the issues of the day. Maybe I thought about being a vet at one time. It's nice to be just in the company of an animal now and again. There's also walking of course, I am still into healthy pursuits. There's a lovely garden to look after at my home and practice, which faces north to the waters of the Firth of Forth.

07: What are the 5 things you could least do without and why?

Trying to tie it down to just five is difficult. If home and family can be one thing, then that's one. Time to relax is another. Seeing people develop and enjoying themselves, maybe at gigs where they really express their passions. I couldn't do without my work of course, nor being surrounded by the laughter of good friends.



08: What would be your top five desert island CDs?

Being quite sociable, I'd not be good on a desert island, so I better start with a beginner's guide to survival on a desert island CD - I'm the practical sort; for music I'd like something by my friends at the Scottish Chamber Orchestra; I'd like *The Kings Speech* film please - because I identify with Lionel Logue, the therapist who persevered with his new and unconventional techniques and was able to really help someone in need; it would be nice to have a collection of works by authors from Edinburgh, this city of literature; and how about a CD of games, I used to be pretty hot on the joystick.

09: If you could meet any historical figure (alive or dead) whom would that be and why?

Meeting Mozart would be quite an experience. Among his many talents, he could listen just once and then write down a score, faultlessly. All that with a quill and paper, under candlelight and with no autocorrect. He died tragically early, but was accomplished even in his childhood. He led a very full life, and that's so much to be admired.

10: Would you like a second career and what would it be?

I meet so many people in different walks of life, that it's only natural to take an interest in their professions. I find that



fascinating, but it's also taught me that it takes a lot of devotion to be expert in your field. So it's alright to dream about what else I'd like to be, but I'm very happy being the osteopath, and having the opportunity to meet so many interesting people.

11: What are your aspirations for your professional future?

It's always been a pleasure encouraging others to enjoy their careers and their lives. I want to continue helping people get all the health they want in life. Personally, these days, I often joke that my aspiration is just for the handbrake of life not to fail on the way downhill.

Dr. Sarah Bailey's question to you:

If you could be a professional sports person, in which sport would it be?

I'd be a jockey, except you to have to be tiny and never eat. If I'd been born in a different era, I'd like to have tried out for the professional women's baseball league, just like Geena Davies in the movie, *A League of Their Own* (left). In the late forties, they were really pioneering superstars, the real wonder women.

What question would you like to ask our next Guest?
"If you could introduce a new sport, what would it be and why?"

