

SAY GOODBYE TO PAIN

HEALING TOUCH Injured? Suffering from back pain? A growing number of patients are enlisting in specialised training-cum-rehab centres



■ Dr Gerd Mueller attending to a client at ActiveOrtho in Delhi.

ARIJIT SEN/HT PHOTO

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Despite the osteoporosis that has weakened her bones, Harmala Gupta, 59, who runs an NGO that supports cancer patients, wanted to stay fit and active.

Her doctor had warned that if she did not exercise, her bones would turn brittle. But for years she did not know where to go for a safe workout.

"I was scared to hit a gym because I was not sure if the instructors were trained to handle a person with my kind of medical history. Apart from osteoporosis, I'm also a cancer survivor. I was in pain and couldn't even walk straight," says Gupta. "I was asked to swim, but that is better for muscles. Finally I heard of ActiveOrtho from a friend and it's been nearly a year and with the range of exercises on different machines, I have never felt fitter."



■ Wrestler Narsingh Yadav training at the Prakruti clinic in Mumbai.

Situated in south Delhi's Vasant Vihar area, ActiveOrtho is a comprehensive centre for sports medicine, orthopaedic rehab, pain management and prevention run by a German orthopaedic specialist and former surgeon, Dr Gerd Mueller.

Nearly three years before he started it, Dr Mueller did some research and discovered there was not much available in terms of proper physical rehabilitation in the city; what was available was post-surgical and post-operative care.

"It was all so scattered and limited. This place had good equipment for surgery but no proper scheme for after treatment," he says.

Standalone rehabilitation centres specialising in sports medicine are a relatively new concept. Dr Pushpinder Bajaj, an orthopaedic surgeon who runs Bajaj Speciality Clinic in south Delhi's Safdarjung Enclave, says: "Customised rehabilitation programmes are the need of the hour for they yield fantastic outcomes post-surgery. A well-done surgery without a good rehab programme is actually only half the job done."

About 70% of the people who visit Bajaj Speciality haven't even undergone surgery, but prefer enlisting here for fitness programmes rather than hitting a gym because they have a joint or muscular condition and need medical supervision.

Some of the most common cases that these centres receive are back, neck and knee pain, loose or flat foot and frozen shoulders. There are some cases of wrist, elbow and ankle pain as well.

In fact, repetitive-stress injuries are not the bane of athletes alone. Fifty per cent of the injuries that Safdarjung Hospital's Sports Injury Centre, a stand-alone centre in the government sector that offers comprehensive rehabilitative care, sees in a day are of people

COMMON SPORTS-RELATED INJURIES



MUSCLE PULL OR TEAR

A sudden and severe force may stretch the muscle beyond capacity, causing a pull or a tear in muscle fibre. Strain, overuse, fatigue or a fall can result in muscle pull or tear in almost anyone.



MUSCLE CRAMP

A cramp is a painful involuntary muscle spasm, usually in the muscles of the legs. It can occur while exercising, playing a sport or simply lying down in bed, mainly due to dehydration.



RUNNER'S KNEE

A common cause of knee pain, this condition occurs due to misalignment of the kneecap within its socket. In some cases, fluid may build up and cause swelling and pain.



TENNIS ELBOW

It's the name for pain and tenderness in the outer part of the elbow as a result of muscle and tendon inflammation. Common in racquet-using players, it may also occur if pressure is exerted on the wrist.



SPRAINED/TWISTED ANKLE

Sprains occur when a twisted foot bruises ligaments that support the ankle on the outside. The severity varies and it is not likely to be broken, but an X-ray is needed to rule out a hairline fracture.

ICONS: ABHIMANYU SINHA

ple who hurt themselves without playing a sport.

In Mumbai, too, such centres are proving a boon for people with sports-related injuries. Filmmaker and marathon runner, Siddharth Bahuguna, 46, was devastated when, after a severe knee tendon injury, his physiotherapist advised him to stop running. Not willing to accept defeat, he went to other physiotherapists but they all said the same thing. However, a search on the internet landed him at the Prakruti Sports Science and Physiotherapy Clinic Centre.

On his first visit, he says, he felt that his injury was finally being understood. "The physiotherapists I met earlier treated me for joint pain or arthritis, but nobody treated it for what it was — a sports injury," says Bahuguna. "Within three months of starting treatment, I got back to running."

Founded in 1997 by physiotherapist

Harshada Rajadhyakshya, Prakruti offers rehab options, lifestyle modification counselling and exercise schedules for people suffering from sports injuries and gait disorders. With ties to the Sports Authority of India, Prakruti helps treat and train national-level athletes.

"I started this clinic after realising that there was a lacuna between treating a sports injury and getting the patient back on track," says Rajadhyakshya. "Back when we started, hardly anyone practiced sports seriously in the city, but now people of all age groups visit us, including professional athletes, marathon runners, school children and senior citizens."

These centres are frequented as much by fitness enthusiasts as patients. "There is no need to live with pain," adds Dr Mueller. "It is possible, by and large, to get rid of it in a non-invasive way."