

Demonstration of the Integrity of Human Superficial Fascia as an Autonomous Organ

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Background: Superficial fascia (AKA the adipose) is almost universally dissected regionally and discarded in the pursuit of deeper structures. Often it is dissected without differentiating it from the skin. Due to these two factors, the autonomous, organ-like integrity and continuity of superficial fascia has not been previously demonstrated. By developing a method for dissecting the entire superficial fascia simultaneously, I demonstrate heretofore overlooked fascial continuities raising questions for further investigation.

Methods: Using scalpels, first the entire skin of a female cadaver is differentiated from the underlying superficial fascia. Next the superficial fascia is incised to the depth of its transitional interface with the underlying fibrous deep fascia on a mid-sagittal anterior line for the torso and two to four centimeters medially from the midline of anatomical position for the limbs. Hands, feet and head are excluded due to practical difficulty of execution. Finally the superficial fascia is differentiated and reflected from the underlying deep fascia circumferentially in total from these incisions and reflected as a unity from the body.

Results: Admitting the exclusion of the hands, feet and head/neck tissue matrices, the superficial fascia of a female cadaver is demonstrated off the body as a continuous, whole body tissue layer with a range of tissue depths and predictable differences in fibrous densities.

Conclusion: Some human forms are sufficiently endowed with a depth of superficial fascia sufficient for easily demonstrating the integrity of that tissue complex as an autonomous organ. Every human form without exception presents this tissue layer in some degree. Replete with its own nervous, vascular and lymphatic endowment, its own complex, elastic and resilient connective tissue matrix, actively contractive smooth muscle fibers, and abundant fatty deposition, the superficial fascia layer bears within itself all of the properties of a discreet and vital organ of the human body which, despite its overwhelming relative size and import, has been heretofore generally overlooked or misunderstood as relatively superfluous by conventional dissection methods. In consideration of its demonstrable unity and integrity as here shown, the structural, physiological and energetic properties and functions of superficial fascia recognized both as a discreet and ubiquitous human organ, as well as in relation to other types of fascia, require much further study.