Researchers Defined the Human Fascial System as Four Anatomical Organs. What Does That Mean for Medical Education?

A peer-reviewed Journal of Anatomy paper defines the human fascial system as four anatomical organs and raises questions for medical education.

Carla Stecco, Professor of Anatomy at the University of Padua and lead author of the 2025 Journal of Anatomy paper proposing a comprehensive definition of the human fascial system. Image from the documentary The Living Body: It's time to talk about Fascia

Life Force Innovation is a Swedish non-profit foundation that supports research and public knowledge about fascia and its role in health.

NY, UNITED STATES, July 6, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- In January 2025, an international research group published a comprehensive definition of fascia in the scientific journal Journal of Anatomy. Its conclusion: fascia is not the body's packing material, but a body-wide anatomical system made up of four organs – superficial, musculoskeletal (deep), visceral and neural fascia. The paper was authored by researchers in the field, including Carla Stecco, Robert Schleip and Neil Theise (DOI: 10.1111/joa.14212).

Fascia is the connective tissue network that runs through the whole body, linking muscles, organs, nerves and cells. Defining it as a system means treating it as something with its own structure and function – comparable to how the circulatory or nervous systems are understood – rather than as inert wrapping to be cut away during dissection. The authors describe it as a shift in perspective on the body. The four organs sit at different depths: the superficial fascia just under the skin, the deep fascia around muscles and joints, the visceral fascia surrounding the organs, and the neural fascia enveloping the nervous system.

This is not a loose idea. There is a coherent, peer-reviewed chain of evidence for how fascia

> When an international research group defines an entire part of the body as its own organ system, that represents an important shift in how the body is understood."
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> *Hans Bohlin, Life Force Innovation*

relates to movement and mechanical function: a specialised cell type, the fasciacyte, regulates the tissue's ability to glide by producing hyaluronic acid (Stecco et al., 2018), and the viscoelastic properties of hyaluronic acid have been characterised (Cowman et al., 2015). These gliding surfaces allow the body's tissues to move smoothly against one another.

Fascia has a long international research history and has been covered by international media for more than a decade. In June 2025, the Swedish Fascia Convention in Uppsala brought together researchers and clinicians from several continents.

The publication also raises a broader question: when an entire part of the body is defined as its own anatomical system in the peer-reviewed literature, how quickly does that knowledge reach medical education and clinical practice?

About Life Force Innovation
Life Force Innovation is a Swedish non-profit foundation working to advance research and knowledge about fascia and its role in health. The foundation is an independent voice.

Scientific Sources
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