**Practitioner Fellowships**

To Establish the Effects of a Role-Specific 12-Week Balance and Stability Conditioning Programme on the Shooting Accuracy in the Standing (Unsupported) Position, with a Handgun, of Authorised Firearms Officers (AFOs) Within Police Scotland

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**Introduction:**

The primary weapon used by police firearms officers is the carbine, (a short-barrelled rifle) such as the Heckler and Koch G36. Officers are also trained in the use of handguns such as the Glock 17, which is issued to provide not only an additional tactical option, but to act as a 'back-up' weapon should the primary weapon develop a fault. Officers are trained to use both weapons in a variety of positions. (ie, Standing, kneeling, prone - supported and unsupported). Whilst proficient use of either weapon requires a considerable amount of training, many officers find it difficult to achieve and sustain the required standard of accuracy with the handgun, especially in the standing unsupported position. Officers who are unable to achieve or sustain the required shooting standard are withdrawn from firearms duties. Aside from the significant training costs and negative effect on individual officers, the loss of personnel trained in this very specialist police role impairs the ability of a force to meet the demands of providing an armed response to incidents. Initial discussions with Senior Officers and Firearms Training Staff from Police Scotland indicates that this is an ongoing issue throughout the force, and has been for some time.

Importance of Postural Balance and Stability in Shooting Accuracy  
Research material in this subject area generally is extremely scant, and more so when specifically considering police use of firearms. However, some analogous research has taken place into sporting, recreational and military shooting skills. Several studies have emphasised the importance of postural balance and stability when shooting from the standing position, with some of these studies also concluding that balance / stability training may improve shooting accuracy. Studies have also established a connection between postural sway, aim point fluctuation and shooting accuracy.

**Aims, Objectives and Methodology:**

* Select a small group (12) of AFOs who are qualified in the handgun.
* Test their balance, fitness and shooting accuracy before the research intervention.
* Divide the participants into two groups of 6 officers (One 'control' group and one intervention group)
* Have the intervention group participate in a role-specific balance and stability fitness program. (2 x 1-hour sessions for 12 weeks)
* Re-test the balance, fitness and shooting accuracy of both groups after the intervention to establish any changes.

**Outputs and Benefits :**

* The discharge of a firearm by a police officer in public is an extremely rare event. However, it does happen, and such occasions present an inherent risk to innocent members of the public. Improving the shooting accuracy of firearms officers will at least go some way to minimising public risk.
* The training program will involve exercises which, as far as possible, can be performed with minimal equipment and in a relatively small space. The overall aim of this would be to provide the force with a simple, inexpensive exercise program which existing AFOs could perform at home to help maintain their shooting standards, or which could be performed by AFO candidates in preparation for initial firearms training.