The quadratus lumborum (QL) is a bilateral, primarily postural muscle responsible for lateral stability and extension in the lumbar spine and can also act as a hip hiker. It attaches to the 12th rib, transverse processes of L1-L4 and the uppermost posterior aspect of the iliac crest (Finando & Finando, 1999).

**Causes and Indications:** the QL’s are commonly involved in but often over looked as the source of lower back pain. If the gluteal muscles, particularly the gluteus medius are weakened and or overused, the QL will be excessively recruited in order to stabilize the pelvis. The result is often low back pain with a notable side bend (hip hike) to the same side of the noted pain. The Glutes and QL’s generally work together during walking, running, down stroke and contact point of the golf swing, single leg or heavy bilateral strength exercises and change of direction sports. Any person frequently engaged in these activities will often and simultaneously develop trigger points in both muscle groups.

If trigger points exist in the QL, due to its connections there will be unequal tension on one side of the spine and or pelvis, possibly causing SIJ (sacroiliac joint) restriction or the spine to be pulled laterally causing thoracic scoliosis (Huhn, 2008). This could cause chronic tension or pain in the mid and upper back and in time will affect further up or down the kinetic chain (i.e. hip, knee, shoulder, neck and head). Other causes of said trigger points may be anatomical (i.e. short leg, short arms, pelvis size discrepancies), trauma from falls or accidents, overuse or poor posture.

**Trigger Point Release:** either lie supine on the floor, stand with your back against the wall (click [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qRb9q3akQro](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qRb9q3akQro)), or to the side of the wall. Using a tennis ball, locate the affected area by finding the floating / bottom rib and then going just beneath it, pushing down, in and 45° upwards. Roll the ball over this area until you find an area of tenderness. With a small circular motion roll this area, exerting enough pressure to feel a tolerable amount of pain, perhaps a 7 or 8 on a scale of 1-
10. Continue for about 15-20 sec/trigger point 6-12 times/day (Davies & Davies, 2004). The release may not happen in one day, it may take several. The diagram below shows the possible trigger point locations (X) in the Quadratus Lumborum as well as the referred pain pattern.

**Corrective Stretch:** trigger point release should almost always be followed with muscle lengthening activities. This includes stretching and antagonist strengthening or activation. A good stretch for the QL’s, erector spinae and latisimus dorsi is 10 & 2 O’clock Child’s Pose (see pics below). To perform,
kneel on floor with buttocks on heels and top of feet flat. Bend forward with arms outstretched bringing chest to thighs and continuing to keep the connection between heels and buttocks. Reach arms over to a 10 o’clock position so that the body is in a “c” curve to the left. Hold this position for at least 60sec before repeating to the other side in a 2 o’clock position. (The afflicted side will be stretched by reaching arms to the opposite side. ie if the right QL is the issue, then reach arms off to the left).

For more practical, readily accessible information on trigger point therapy, visit William Huhn’s website at www.triggerpoint.ca.