

BSc (Hons) Health and Social Care
BMHP5001

Complementary Therapies

Lecturer Joanna Walsh

An individual supporting paper

**An Osteopathy manipulative therapy in low
back pain (LBP)**

Nataliya Virych 1909127

26/04/2021

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Introduction to the Osteopathic Therapy

Osteopathy is a branch of clinical medicine that includes providing medical care for patients with somatic dysfunctions at the stage of prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation. These are based on the anatomical and functional structure of the body, with which manual recovery methods are used. The body's ability to correct itself is one of the few manual medical disciplines regulated by the World Health Organization. Internationally, Osteopathy is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as:

“A system of medicine that emphasises the theory that the body can produce its own medicines under normal structural relationships, environmental conditions and nutrition. It differs from allopathy primarily because it pays more attention to body mechanics and manipulative techniques in diagnosis and therapy” (World Health Organization, 2010, p. 43).

Osteopathic practice is considered to fit within the framework of concepts and principles.

The basic principle of Osteopathy is based on the concept of the interconnectedness of all parts of the body; that is, if any organ is sick, then other organs of the system will compensate for its work. This can cause pain, tension, and inflammation. As George Northup observed in *Osteopathic Medicine, The American Reformation*: The musculoskeletal system is closely connected with all other body systems through the voluntary and involuntary nervous systems.

Thus, it indicates that the musculoskeletal system is a mirror of health and illness, in response, as it does to inflammation and pain from disorders in other systems of the body. (Northup, 1966)

Practising osteopaths help not only minimise stress and pain and eliminate the cause of the disease by restoring the balance of the whole body. Currently, there are several types of Osteopathy:

Cranial Osteopathy is a technique for manipulating the bones of the skull.

Sacral Osteopathy restores the balance of the whole body.

Visceral Osteopathy is a method that affects the organs of the genitourinary and digestive systems.

Structural Osteopathy is applied to the neuromuscular-skeletal system.

Energetic Osteopathy is a combination of classical techniques with traditional Chinese medicine.

Main body

History of Osteopathy

Osteopathy was founded in 1874 by Andrew Taylor Still. The word's origin is from the Greek for bone (osteon) and suffering (pathos). The son of a priest, he attended the College of Physicians and Surgeons in Kansas City, Kansas, fought in the Civil War and was promoted to Major. After the war, Still provided medical care to settlers and American Indians.

He disagreed with many medical treatments and drug use, faced with epidemics such as cholera, smallpox, diphtheria and tuberculosis. Still believed that the physician's role is to help the body's innate ability to heal itself and argued that the physician could promote health through manipulative techniques on the musculoskeletal system. His goal was not to create a new separate profession; he wanted to rationalise the current system of medicine of the 19th century, giving it a more scientific basis. (CristalWind.ca, 2008)

In the 19th century, there were many schools of medicine, many of which had poorly or incompletely trained doctors and a dubious reputation. Growth in Still's services as a physician-led him to find an osteopathic medical school. Andrew Still opened the American School of Osteopathy in Kirksville in 1892 with a class of 17. The main subjects were Anatomy, Histology Physiology, Toxicology and Manipulation.

In Great Britain, the first British School of Osteopathy appeared in 1917 at Buckingham Gate London. It was founded by the minister of the Church of Scotland, John Martin Littlejohn (1865-1947). He was one of the first students at the American School of Osteopathy (ASO), where he met A Still.

After graduating from high school and qualifying, Little John returned to the UK, where he gave his first lecture on Osteopathy in 1898.

The school was located in Buckingham Gate London until the 1980s, and from the mid-1990s to the present day, it is located on Borough High Street in London. The

first enrolment consisted of 20 students who were to receive a diploma in Osteopathy. The school graduates more than 100 students who, after studying for four years, receive a qualification with a Master's degree in Osteopathy (M.Ost).

In the UK, there are currently eleven osteopathic education institutions, providing undergraduate training (lasting four years full-time or five years part-time) and post-graduate osteopathic training, which is recognised, and quality assured by the General Osteopathic Council (GOsC) every three to five years. (McGivern, 2015)

In the UK, the GOsC describe osteopathy as:

“A system of diagnosis and treatment for a wide range of medical conditions. It works with the structure and function of the body. It is based on the principle that the well-being of an individual depends on the skeleton, muscles, ligaments and connective tissues functioning smoothly together” (Anon., 2021)

Osteopathy specializes in diagnosing, managing, treating, and preventing the musculoskeletal system and other related diseases.

The treatment is practical and includes skilful manipulation of the spine and joints and soft tissue massage.

Contraindications

Osteopathy is one of the few alternative treatments that have fewer contraindications. It makes it possible to diagnose and treat people of different age groups. The likelihood of harm caused by osteopathic treatment is low. It can be minimized, but there are still contraindications: osteoporosis, fractures, infections, acute inflammatory conditions, cancer, multiple sclerosis (MS) Any condition that can lead to bleeding, or the risk of its occurrence, a condition requiring urgent medical attention (appendicitis, intracerebral bleeding), the presence of an unspecified diagnosis, all this is an absolute contraindication to osteopathic treatment.

Efficacy and how Osteopathy compares to traditional treatments

Osteopathic practitioners are licensed in many countries, but this does not mean that osteopathic treatment is effective.

World Health Organization still refers to Osteopathy as alternative Therapy.

British pharmacologist and supporter of evidence-based medicine David Colquhoun says that

“There is very little reason to believe that this kind of manipulation works. People recover with almost the same success, regardless of whether this type of treatment was given or not.”

The developed methodology of osteopathic diagnostics made it possible to conduct scientific research that meets evidence-based medicine requirements. It also helps develop clinical recommendations for the use of OM therapy to treat different diseases.

Clinical studies of the effectiveness of OT are complicated by the fact that the impact is manual. A double-blind, placebo-controlled study is difficult or not possible. For some other methods of treatment, such as surgical interventions, physiotherapy, methods of restorative medicine, it is also impossible for objective reasons.

However, it is possible to organize randomized studies with a sufficient number of patients, form main and control groups of patients with similar characteristics (age, gender, disease), and use instrumental research methods to objectify treatment results.

Lower back pain (LBP) is a global problem and is not only a medical problem but also a social and economic problem as it is one of the leading reasons for seeking medical attention and disability in people of different ages. They are associated with significant socio-economic losses for society due to temporary disability. Typically, with LBP, a GP will prescribe pain relievers, give advice on rest and work, and refer you to a physical therapist. Clinical practice guidelines for the treatment of low back pain recommend spinal manipulation. To improve the quality of life and reduce disability, new approaches to implementing preventive strategies are needed. Thus, improving nutrition and exercise effectively can be used from early childhood to prevent back pain. (Potekhina Yulia, 2018)

The Randomised Controlled Trials (RCT) is considered the best way to get an estimate of the effectiveness of a particular therapy.

UK BEAM Trial "The United Kingdom Back Pain, Exercise and Manipulation Randomized Trial: Cost- Effectiveness of Physical Treatments for Back Pain in Primary Care." compared the benefits of spinal manipulation and exercise in General practice (GP) for patients consulting for back pain. (11 & 10.1136/bmj.38282.607859.AE, 2004)

1287 participants were studied for more than one year, and they were divided into different groups: exercise class and manipulation followed exercise (combined treatment).

Participants completed questionnaires about their health status at baseline, three months and 12 months later.

Exercise program - included initial assessment and up to nine open sessions over 12 weeks.

Combination Treatment - Participants received six weeks of manipulation followed by six weeks of exercise.

The UK BEAM authors concluded that cheaper to cure patients who received manipulation and exercises, and the results were much better than the patients that received medical care.

Conclusion

There is no agreement on Osteopathy. However, most of the relevant studies do not support its effectiveness. The results of many trials, in which the positive effect of such therapy is noted, cannot be called reliable due to violations of the rules for their conduct.

Osteopathic treatment is safe. It provides an individual approach to patients, permits the reduction of the drug load and the risk of the development of polypharmacy. It works well with other methods of treatment. Manual osteopathic techniques can be used in combination with traditional clinical medicine and a worthy help in providing medical care. Most likely, harm from Osteopathy can be only if the patient refuses traditional methods of diagnosis and treatment. The patient and doctor may waste time.

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