



Osteopathic Medicine





Osteopathy

By Mohit Khosla, DO MRO, Christian Lepage, DO MRO



The osteopath's mission

Osteopaths view the human body as much more than the sum of its individual parts. This vision encompasses the entire individual in all of his or her unique complexity.



Philosophical foundations of osteopathy

Osteopaths believe that where there is normal motion, there is health. Osteopathy appreciates the significance of even the smallest of movements, and applies this understanding in its unique form of manual medicine. When the body's motion potentials are balanced, a state of health exists. In other words, opposing forces acting on the body's structural framework are counterbalanced when one is healthy. A finely tuned sense of touch allows the Osteopath to palpate (feel) normal versus abnormal motion.

Although osteopathy employs the practice of manual medicine, it is not just a set of techniques. It is a philosophy and science based on the application of sound principles.

What is osteopathy?

Osteopathy is a holistic, drugless manual system of health care. In its ideal form, it is both an art and a science founded on the safe and effective application of the following principles:

A human being acts as a complete dynamic unit of function including the concept and relationship of the body, mind, and spirit.

There are many linking systems within the body where no single part exists independent of any other. The circulatory system supplies



blood to every connective tissue and organ. The nervous system is the body's information highway connecting and integrating all of the body's functions. Both systems help to organize the body into a unified continuous whole. The entire individual is affected even when only a small part of the body may not be functioning optimally.

Consider the circulatory system. When blood and other fluids flow freely, the tissues can perform their normal functions without interference. When the fluid dynamics are altered, the result can be a twisting or compression of all tissues. Flow is then obstructed and areas of the body may become under-nourished leading to a diseased state. It is similar to trying to water a garden with a kinked hose. The water will not flow properly and the garden will not receive its proper nutrition.

Understanding the relationship between structure (anatomy) and function (physiology) allows the osteopath to diagnose and treat each patient as a functional whole. This will help explain why an osteopath may treat an area that is fairly distant from the area of pain or injury.

The body possesses self-regulatory mechanisms, which are protective and self-healing in nature.

The human body is always working to maintain a balanced state. For example, blood pressure, blood sugar and heart rate are actively kept within a normal range. This occurs because within every cell there is an innate wisdom and intelligence that keeps the body healthy. When a state of disharmony arises, the body's inborn healing force acts to restore functional balance and harmony. Sometimes these self-healing forces may be impaired by disease or structural imbalance.

ANSWERS YOU'RE ACHING TO KNOW



An osteopath is trained to augment the intrinsic healing mechanisms to help the body restore normal function.

Structure and function are interrelated at all levels.

Think of the body as an engineering marvel. It has interrelated parts that need to be in proper position and to move correctly for optimal function. For example, taking a deep breath may be difficult if the ribs, diaphragm, or parts of the spine do not move well. When breathing is hindered, drainage (necessary for clearing congestion and inflammation) will be adversely affected. This may lead to the development of asthma or respiratory infections.

Osteopathic treatment applies these principles with a sound and thorough knowledge of anatomy and physiology. An osteopathic approach to treatment typically integrates manipulation to restore structural freedom in the tissues and enhance fluid flow throughout the body, thus creating an environment conducive to healing.

The science of osteopathy includes the behavioural, biological, chemical, physical, and spiritual knowledge related to the establishment and maintenance of health, as well as the prevention and alleviation of disease. The individual's nervous and muscular systems are considered key elements in the application of osteopathy. Therefore, it is a means by which health-promoting changes may be facilitated through the appropriate use of manipulation.



What makes osteopathy different from other forms of manual therapy?

Osteopathy is a holistic system of health care based on the dynamic interrelationships of a person's functional anatomy and the corresponding effects on the individual's physiology. Osteopathy should not be defined by its manual techniques but rather by the application of its philosophy.

I heard that osteopaths use techniques that other practitioners use, so how is it different?

The osteopathic philosophy and understanding of how to best utilize and integrate the various manual techniques define osteopathy. Osteopaths believe it is most important to learn how these approaches fit together in a treatment plan. The approaches chosen for treatment are considered only after careful evaluation, guided by osteopathic reasoning.



What does the science of osteopathy suggest as a curative procedure?



The osteopathic practice aims to “re-normalize abnormal tissues.” This means that a certain normal standard exists for every individual spine, and that if there are variants from this standard, then it is the work of the osteopath to “normalize” those structures in order to give freedom to the body’s machinery to heal naturally.

For example, the osteopath looks at spinal problems as a spoke within the wheel of structural imbalance. The twisting and pulling from the body’s foundation irritates our binding and braking systems – namely, the deep ligaments and tendons of the pelvis. This is often the root of many spinal problems.

Various health problems can often be traced back to a faulty and poorly aligned pelvis. The arthritic hip and that painful bunion, not to mention a host of other problems, often had their start in a twisted pelvic base.

When is a knee problem not a knee problem?

How often have people walked on a buckled or painful knee? Needing help, they have been given symptom-relieving treatments



that often do not address the underlying causes of the problem. In time, the improperly-treated condition irritates other parts of the body that are not commonly considered connected to the knee. However, the osteopath who understands the physical, mechanical, and chemical unity of the human body can adjust the body to help restore health.

Osteopathic diagnosis and treatment

A typical office visit usually consists of the following elements:

- Medical health history
- Structural exam: Following the history, an osteopathic structural evaluation is performed. An osteopath feels for altered or restricted motion through gentle touch. Bony asymmetry, tissue function (i.e., muscle, ligament, tendon), and quality of movement are evaluated.
- Diagnosis: A thorough osteopathic diagnosis connects the patient's history to the structural evaluation. As the osteopath places his or her hands upon the patient, functional dynamics are perceived and a “cause and effect” relationship emerges. Patients are often relieved to know that their symptoms make sense.
- Treatment: Treatment, for the most part, is very gentle where tissues are supported and allowed to change. Minimal force is used during treatment, but at times some force may be necessary. When performed correctly, diagnosis and treatment blend into one another. Each patient’s experience is unique where some individuals sense only a gentle touch, while others feel their



body change immediately. Some patients simply feel a deep sense of relaxation.

How long does it take to see results?

Results depend on the body's inherent vitality (ability to heal), as well as the severity and duration of the problem. Some conditions will respond immediately, whereas others will require some continuity of care.

It is important to understand that osteopathy is not a cure-all. It can certainly benefit everyone, because everyone has been imprinted individually by the traumas of life. It may be necessary to include other types of treatment for some patients.

Who is qualified to practice osteopathy?

Those practitioners who hold true to the original concepts and philosophy taught by the founder, Dr. Andrew Taylor Still (1828-1917), are a good start. When looking for an osteopath, make sure they come from a reputable school that teaches osteopathy and not just manual manipulation and techniques. The coursework of osteopathy should be equivalent to not less than five years of full-time post-graduate study, although this may be delivered in a variety of ways, especially if the practitioner has had previous education and training.



Final thoughts

Osteopathy is about understanding the dynamic relationships of anatomy (structure) and physiology (function). The secret is to understand how the body works and to train our minds and senses to be able to discern why abnormalities are present. Then it is simply a matter of applying an appropriate treatment stimulus to help the individual normalize and stabilize.

“An osteopath reasons from his knowledge of anatomy. He compares the work of the abnormal body with the work of the normal body.” – Dr. Andrew Taylor Still

Mohit Khosla
LifeSource Medical Centre
130 Robertson Road
Nepean, ON K2H 5Z1

Phone: 613-828-6443
Fax: 613-828-2010
www.lifesourcehc.com