

According to a New Study, Osteopathy Can be utilised to Address Mental Health Disorders Associated with Back Pain

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Introduction

Millions of people all around the world suffer from persistent musculoskeletal back pain (lasting more than three months). The problem is so widespread that it is estimated that 116 million days of work are lost in the UK alone, a million hospital appointments are made, and five million GP visits are planned - all for low back pain. Physical pain, on the other hand, is frequently not a single issue. Low back pain affects 35% of persons, who are also diagnosed with depression, anxiety, and social isolation [1].

According to NICE guidelines, chronic back pain patients should receive physical therapy as part of a comprehensive treatment plan that includes psychosocial support. However, we've been looking into how one sort of osteopathic treatment can be utilised to treat both physical and mental issues.

Osteopathic manipulative treatment is a drug-free medical technique that diagnoses and treats pain-related problems through touch-based massage, soft tissue and joint manipulation, and spine mobilisation procedures. Practitioners employ a structured evaluation to identify and treat dysfunction in the skull, spine, pelvis, and abdomen, as well as the upper and lower limbs. OMT has been shown to be beneficial for a variety of musculoskeletal pain conditions, including chronic neck pain. Furthermore, it has been shown to be more successful than typical primary care treatments like exercise and medicines at improving quality of life for people with persistent low back pain three and twelve months after therapy [2].

OMT has also been demonstrated to help people with subacute (in between acute and chronic) low back pain. As a result, spinal mobilisation and manipulation have been shown to be beneficial in the treatment of acute, subacute, and chronic low back pain. While everything here is wonderful, there is a trend. The minimal OMT study has primarily focused on physical disorders, rather than the mental health challenges that go along with them.

Managing mental health problems

We just completed one of the first studies on the psychological impact of OMT - with positive results - at our university health and well-being academy to learn more about how osteopathy could potentially benefit mental health [3].

The academy's therapists have been employing OMT to treat members of the public suffering from a variety of musculoskeletal diseases that have resulted in chronic pain for the past five years. We looked at three points in time - before OMT treatment, after the first week of treatment, and after the second week of treatment - and asked patients how they felt using mental health questionnaires to learn more about the treatment's mental health effects. OMT has been demonstrated to be beneficial in lowering anxiety and psychological distress, as well as enhancing patient self-care, according to this

research. However, it may not be appropriate for all mental problems linked to chronic pain. For example, we discovered that OMT was less helpful in the treatment of depression and fear avoidance [4].

But it's not all doom and gloom. Our findings also revealed that by combining OMT with other therapy approaches such as acceptance and commitment therapy, the favourable psychological benefits of OMT could be enhanced even more (ACT). According to some study, psychological issues like anxiety and depression are linked to inflexibility and contribute to experiencing avoidance. Because ACT reduces experience avoidance, it may be effective in reducing fear avoidance and depression (which OMT did not significantly reduce). Other researchers have suggested that this combination approach could be beneficial for some OMT subgroups that are willing to take the treatment. Furthermore, at least one pilot clinical trial and feasibility study that used ACT and OMT with some effectiveness has already been conducted [5].

In order to build on our great results, we have started developing our ACT treatment in the academy, which will be coupled with the existing osteopathic therapy. Though there will be a variety of ACT therapies available, one of them is psychoeducational in character. It can be offered through internet teaching videos and homework activities, for example, and does not require an active therapist to work with the patient

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