

Origins of Osteopathic Manual Practice

Andrew Taylor Still (Physician and Surgeon) MD, DO (1827-1917) is credited with the development of the modern day philosophical approach to osteopathy. In 1864, Still's 3 children suddenly died from spinal meningitis. Still immersed himself in the study of health, illness, and disease. His goal was to discover reliable methods for curing and preventing all that ailed his patients. (Chila, 2011)

Following in the footsteps of historical physicians Hippocrates (c. 460–c. 377 b.c.e.), Galen (c. 130–c. 200), and Sydenham (1624–1689), Still questioned what he viewed as inadequate Orthodox medical practices of the day. Still began to propose the idea of the patient's innate ability to heal. While employing current medical practices of his time during 1853 through to 1879, Still practiced with available medications and manipulative techniques to treat ailments. Keeping records and comparing results Still was able to determine the effectiveness of his mechanical corrections and consistently achieved the same or better result **without** the use of medications. His confidence in the body's natural healing ability formed the foundation of this new wellness approach. He called it "Osteopathy" from the Greek words "osteon" meaning bone and "pathos" meaning to suffer. (Chila, 2011)

Osteopathic Principles

Still believed health is the natural state of all human beings and health is a result of a normal condition:

"Osteopathy is based on the perfection of Nature's work. When all parts of the human body are in **line** we have health. When they are not the effect is disease. When the parts are readjusted dis-ease gives place to health. The work of the osteopath is to adjust the body from the abnormal to the normal, then the abnormal conditions give place to the normal and health is the result of the normal condition." (Chila, 2011)

Still's founding principles are:

1. The body is a unit.
2. Structure governs function.
3. The rule of artery is supreme.
4. The body possesses self-regulatory and self-healing mechanisms.

These founding principles are the foundation of osteopathy. Over time Osteopathic educators and associations have updated these founding principles to reflect current practices and understanding. For the purposes of this webpage I will focus on the original ideas.

1. The body is a unit.

Still understood the body as whole and functions in harmony as a result of the sum of its parts. From gross anatomy to the microscopic physiological functions, the body systems all work as a team. It is this teamwork that allows individuals to remain in balance. Any changes within the body both internally or externally will have a compounding effect. Expanding upon this idea and looking beyond the common anatomical view, balance to the mind, body and spirit occurs congruently.

2. Structure governs function.

When there is a change in structure, function is affected and the body is disrupted. An example of this would be a sprained ligament; an outside force stretches the ligamentous tissue leading to laxity in the joint. The central nervous system would recruit muscle and fascia tissue to make up for the joint laxity. This inherent protection mechanism would cause a functional disturbance in the body leading to abnormal changes.

3. The role of artery is supreme.

Simply put, blood flow is important to overall health. A direct result of proper blood flow is healthy tissue. If blood flow is compromised via structural disturbances tissues cannot operate efficiently thus disturbing homeostasis.

4. The body possesses self-regulatory and self-healing mechanisms.

The self-regulatory mechanism still recognized is now known as homeostasis. Complex and constant interaction between anatomical systems allows the body to remain in a state of physiological balance. When the body experiences dysfunction, additional workload is created to maintain balance. This is known as “allostatic load.” Allostatic load is the perseverance of a load causing specific effects on the body. Removal of the allostatic load allows the body to return to normal balance. The self-healing mechanism employs the body’s innate ability to heal. Leveraging several body systems including immunity, nervous, endocrine and vascular systems, the body will repair itself following the removal of structural dysfunction.

How does Osteopathic Manual Practice help?

Osteopathic Manual Practice is a gentle, hands on manual therapy designed to help reduce pain experienced in your body’s fascial tissue, musculature, and joints. Through guiding principles and various hands on techniques the Manual Osteopath looks to maintain, improve, and restore the natural physiological function of interrelated body structures and systems so that the body’s natural ability to heal itself is enhanced.

The individual who is aware of dysfunction and disorder in their body will benefit from Manual Osteopathic assessment, treatment techniques and modalities. Joint mobilizations, soft tissue therapy, direct or indirect stretching can all be used in combinations to help ease pain, reduce inflammation, improve function and promote healing for an overall sense of wellbeing.

Manual Osteopathy is recognized by the World Health Organization as a form of Alternative or Complimentary approach to health care. Osteopathic Manual Therapy (OMT) scope of practice includes:

1. Joint mobilization – gentle joint range of motion techniques used to help free up structures, increase blood flow and reduce pain
2. Direct or indirect stretching – engaging, releasing and passive stretching used to promote lengthening in the fascial and muscle tissue
3. Soft Tissue Therapy – utilizing manual tissue techniques to find motion restrictions and work with the client to help restore function. Can be applied to muscle and visceral tissues.
4. Introduction and application of evidence based non-invasive electrotherapeutic modalities to further promote the body's natural healing process.
5. Craniosacral and Visceral Osteopathic mobilization.

The Osteopathic Manual Practitioner follows these principles to enable the body to heal it self:

1. The body is a unit; the person is a unit of mind, body and spirit.
2. The body is capable of self-regulation, self-healing and health maintenance.
3. Structure and function are reciprocally related.
4. Rational manual treatment is based upon and understanding of the basic principles of body unity, self-regulation and the interrelationship of structure and function. (Chila, 2011, p. 21)

How does Osteopathic Manual Practice work?

Osteopathic Manual Practice is a patient centred form of health care focusing on the treatment of body structure in order to optimize body function. Osteopathy is grounded in the following principles for treatment and patient management:

- The human being is a dynamic functional unit whose state of health is influenced by the body, mind and spirit;
- The body possesses self-regulatory mechanisms and is naturally self-healing;
- Structure and function are interrelated at all levels of the human body.

Health Restoration and Disease Prevention

Osteopathy places importance on restoration of well being appropriate for the patient's age and health potential. This includes addressing:

- Physical, mental, and spiritual components
- Personal safety
- Necessary rest and relaxation
- Proper nutritional choices
- Regular aerobic, stretching and strengthening exercises
- Maintaining healthy social relationships
- Avoidance of tobacco and other abused substances
- Eliminating or modifying abusive personal, interpersonal, family, and work-related behavior patterns
- Awareness and avoidance of environmental radiation and toxins

Structure-Function Relationship Models

There are five main models of structure-function relationships that direct the Osteopathic approach to diagnosis and treatment of the individual. These models are usually used in combination to provide a framework for interpreting the significance of somatic dysfunction within the context of objective and subjective clinical information. The combination chosen is adapted to the patient's differential diagnosis, co-morbidities, other therapeutic regimens and response to treatment.

1. The biomechanical structure-function model.

The biomechanical model views the body as an integration of somatic components that relate as a mechanism for posture and balance. Stresses or imbalances within this mechanism may affect dynamic function, increase energy expenditure, alter proprioception (one's sense of the relative position and movement of neighbouring parts of the body), change joint structure, impede neurovascular function and alter metabolism. This model applies therapeutic approaches, including Osteopathic manipulative techniques, which allow for the restoration of posture and balance and efficient use of musculoskeletal components.

2. The respiratory/circulatory structure-function model.

The respiratory/circulatory model is focused on the maintenance of extracellular and intracellular environments through the unimpeded delivery of oxygen and nutrients, and the removal of cellular waste products. Tissue stress or other factors interfering with the flow or circulation of any body fluid can affect tissue health. This model applies therapeutic approaches, including Osteopathic manipulative techniques, to address dysfunction in respiratory mechanics, circulation, and the flow of body fluids.

3. The neurological structure-function model.

The neurological model considers the influence of spinal facilitation, proprioceptive function, the autonomic nervous system and activity of nociceptors (pain fibres) on the function of the neuroendocrine immune network. The relationship between the somatic and visceral (autonomic) systems is of particular importance. This model applies therapeutic approaches, including Osteopathic manipulative techniques, to reduce mechanical stresses, balance, neural inputs and reduce or eliminate nociceptive drive.

4. The bio psychosocial structure-function model

The bio psychosocial model recognizes the various reactions and psychological stresses, which can affect patients' health and wellness. These include environmental, socioeconomic, cultural, physiological and psychological factors that influence disease. This model applies therapeutic approaches, including Osteopathic manipulative techniques, to address the effects of, and reactions to, various bio psychosocial stresses.

5. The bioenergetic structure-function model

The bioenergetic model recognizes the body seeks to maintain a balance between energy production, distribution and expenditure. Maintaining this balance aids the body in its ability to adapt to various stressors (immunological, nutritional, psychological, etc.) This model applies therapeutic approaches, including Osteopathic manipulative techniques, to address factors which have the potential to deregulate the production, distribution or expenditure of energy.

Osteopathic treatment Model

