

What makes an osteopathic treatment “effective” in patients’ perspective: a descriptive phenomenological study.

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Abstract

Objectives: The effectiveness of osteopathic treatment has been described in the literature with reference to three main outcomes: the improvement of systemic and bodily functions, the reduction of pain and the improvement of biomechanical parameters. This study aims to describe patients’ perspectives on their experience in osteopathic treatment, to contribute towards developing interpretative models on effectiveness.

Methods: A descriptive phenomenological approach was used. The data were collected through a semi-structured interview. To capture the variability of the phenomenon, a purposive sample of 12 participants with previous experience of osteopathic care was selected. The data analysis was carried out in an inductive way and it was parallel to the recruitment to continuously monitor the data saturation.

Results: Data saturation was reached with 12 participants (F = 9; M = 3) Participants age ranged from 27 to 82 years old (mean: 55,25 ± 17,15; median: 59; kurtosis: -0,82). Participants had different reasons for consultation.

The analysis showed one overarching theme “Osteopathy is a path of awareness”, 3 themes and 12 categories. Themes were: (1) “The experience of pain produces awareness of the need for care”; (2) “Osteopathy is a journey to be shared over time”; (3) “The effectiveness of the osteopathic treatment is the discovery of the person’s unity by experience”.

Conclusions: Participants affirm that osteopathy is a path of awareness which starts from an experience of pain, that leads them to contact an osteopath, and ends with their experience of the unity of body, mind and spirit.