

CLINICAL UNCERTAINTY IN OSTEOPATHIC PRACTICE AMONG INTERNSHIP STUDENTS: A SURVEY RESEARCH

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BACKGROUND: Clinical practice is an important component in osteopathic training programs. For many students, however, coping with the inherent uncertainties of clinical practice can cause difficulties in transitioning from the classroom to the clinical learning environment. This can consequently lead to problems in terms of diagnosis, management and communication with the patient. Uncertainty affects all parts of clinical practice, from diagnosis to therapeutic decisions.

OBJECTIVE: The purpose of this study is to investigate through a questionnaire how much trainee students experience and deal with clinical diagnostic uncertainty and how much differential diagnosis can help in the management of uncertainty and in the development of optimal clinical reasoning. The clinical utility of the research project is to be able to identify how the course of study can be improved in order to help them to have the right tools to face and manage diagnostic clinical uncertainty in their own working experience.

METHODS: the study is a survey research carried out using a questionnaire, aimed at trainees in osteopathic practice. The questionnaire, administered online through Survey Monkey, consists of four sections, which address the following macro-topics: educational path, clinical experience, uncertainty management and demographic information.

RESULTS: (preliminary results) 78 student trainees (female 59.21%) answered the online questionnaire. Most of the participants (90.9%) stated that they found themselves in situations of clinical diagnostic uncertainty during the internship, and the most cited emotional consequences were anxiety, frustration and a sense of inadequacy in front of the patient. Many of them also stated that good preparation in differential diagnosis would be extremely (42.11%) or very (47.37%) useful in managing uncertainty. Almost all of the students (73) consider the clinical tutor to be fundamental as a support in dealing with complex or uncertain situations.

CONCLUSIONS: in addition to the incidence of clinical diagnostic uncertainty among trainee osteopathy students, this survey research highlights how the knowledge of differential diagnosis and pathology, therefore the recognition of specific signs and symptoms of a given clinical condition, is useful in the management uncertainty itself. Furthermore, the role of the clinical tutor is of extreme importance for the student. Therefore, specific training for clinical tutors is relevant regarding clinical uncertainty, its consequences and strategies for its management.