

Osteopathy as Relational Clinical Practice

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OSEAN Proposal

Distinguishing practice from medicine and science, educating students to advance their own praxis

We are curious about the role played by the tradition of empiricist science in exploring and explaining two poles of the EBM triad, namely patient values and clinical expertise. We propose that the human sciences (such as sociology, anthropology and philosophy) might have more appropriate methodologies for explaining and describing these aspects of EBM. Following from this, the osteopathic curriculum would be underpinned by reflective practice, critical thinking and a grounding in the arts, humanities and social sciences.

Person-centred, relational, models of practice promoting epistemic humility and epistemological flexibility, from a pluralistic ontological platform

We present osteopathy as a relational clinical practice, suggesting that the relationship between the patient (person) and the osteopath (person) is more important than has yet been demonstrated or explained in osteopathic research, theory or teaching.

We propose that the clinical practice of osteopathy (and other, related, human-scale and largely one-to-one healthcare practices) could broaden its theoretical and evidentiary base by turning to the research traditions of the arts and the human and social sciences, with different conceptions of practice explored through different methods - and, importantly, with different accounts of the nature of reality (ontology) and the structures of knowledge (epistemology).

Osteopathic models of practice, and therefore conceptions of praxis and education, would therefore be broadened to take into account the history of scientific thought, the philosophy of medicine and healthcare, sociological and anthropological perspectives that shed light on the political, economic and cultural contexts of the health of our patients.

Refs:

Banton, A., Vogel, S., & Lee-Treweek, G. (2023). Making sense of cranial osteopathy: An interpretative phenomenological analysis. *International Journal of Osteopathic Medicine*, 50. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijosm.2023.100673>.

Banton, A., & Vogel, S. (2024). Relational clinical practice: A hermeneutic, enactive, intersubjective model of osteopathy. *International Journal of Osteopathic Medicine*, in press. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijosm.2023.100707>.