

TEACHING THE PRINCIPLES OF OSTEOPATHY IN A MODERN CONTEXT

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The teaching of osteopathic principles traditionally draws on historical principles and subsequent revisions from the early and late twentieth century, respectively. These principles are empirical and were developed using *prima facie* logic, but, arguably, without a strong foundation of supporting scientific evidence. In the modern healthcare environment, there is a strong imperative for graduate osteopaths to be independent, critical thinkers and for patient management to be evidence-based and defensible. The challenge to all osteopathic educators is how to align teaching with modern expectations for critical thinking and evidence-based treatment without losing the tradition and distinctiveness of osteopathic principles and practice.

Drawing on over two decades as an osteopathic educator and advocate of evidence-informed osteopathy, Associate Professor Gary Fryer will outline an approach to teaching aimed to meet the expectations and capabilities for a student graduate. An understanding of the historical background and development of osteopathic principles allows students to recognise that ongoing development of these principles is not just desirable, but inevitable, particularly in light of evolving evidence. Integration of pain science and biopsychosocial factors in pain management is crucial to a modern osteopathic curriculum. A model of therapeutic mechanisms in osteopathic practice is presented that may guide student clinical reasoning. Activities that link principles and practice to scientific evidence and promote student criticality must be imbedded throughout the curriculum to produce graduates who reflect on traditional principles, are critical thinkers capable of acknowledging the uncertainties of traditional principles and limited evidence, and are equipped with the skills to search, appraise and integrate new evidence into their clinical practice.