

Osteopathy originated in the United States in the 1870s in Kirksville, Missouri. It was founded by a physician, Andrew Taylor Still, who, after having lost three of his five children during a meningitis outbreak, decided that medicine at that time had failed him and his family. He began to conduct his own research which was the beginning of what would be known to all osteopathic students as the principles of osteopathy. In 1874 the practice of osteopathy was launched. In 1892 the first school, The American Academy of Osteopathy, was founded by Dr. Still. It is now named after him.

The principles of osteopathy are as follows:

Structure governs function: If injury, disuse or disease alters the structure of any tissue then its function will automatically change.

The role of the artery is absolute: If there is an interference or change in the circulation, even if only on a small scale, the related structure will be affected. The circulatory system is responsible for supplying nutrients and carrying away waste so there is a direct relationship between optimal circulation and health.

The body possesses a system of autoregulation: This is the inherent ability of the body to self-regulate. Blood pressure fluctuation is an excellent example of the capacity of the body to regulate itself. As the action of the individual changes (for example moving from sitting to standing then to running) blood pressure and rate of flow will automatically change according to the demand being placed on the tissue doing the most work.

There is a unity of function: The body itself is considered to be one functional unit. The body is a system comprised of multiple systems which all work together to achieve and maintain homeostasis.

The continuity of the fascia: There is a system of fascia or connective tissue which gives form and support to the body. It is considered to be a living web and a unit in and of itself. It allows one area to be connected to and be in direct communication (via tension) with another. The tension running through this structure, if homogenous, will contribute to the health of the individual.

The body has the inherent capacity to heal itself: It is thought that on a physiological level the body possesses all of the substances necessary in order to heal itself. When injury or disease comes into play at any point, the conditions are categorized in a hierarchy in terms of the body's resiliency or ability to bounce back. This is known as the stages of degeneration from lesser to greater: adaptation, compensation, decompensation, Death.

The principles of osteopathy are the main concepts which every practitioner uses to develop a treatment plan which is unique to the individual seeking treatment

Osteopathy is a growing profession in Canada but is relatively new to Nova Scotia. There are currently seven registered osteopaths in the province from various backgrounds such as athletic therapy and massage therapy. Most practitioners have been previously trained in a discipline which is complimentary to osteopathic treatment and still use techniques from their background depending on what would benefit the patient most. An osteopath trained by the Canadian College of Osteopathy would have

the knowledge and skills necessary to treat patients from ages 1 day to 100+ years. The most common conditions for which patients seek help include but are not limited to: allergies, anxiety, arthritis, asthma, bell's palsy, carpal tunnel syndrome, cardiac issues, chronic back pain, colic, depression, developmental disabilities, digestive disturbances, disc degeneration/herniation, dyslexia, dysmenorrhea (painful menstruation), ear infections, facial pain/spasm, fibromyalgia, gastro-esophageal reflux, hayfever, headache, head injuries, neuro-musculoskeletal pain management, plantar fasciitis, postural concerns, scars, sciatica, sinusitis, sleep disturbances, sprains/strains, stress urinary incontinence, tmj/tmd, torticollis, tinnitus, visual disturbances, whiplash injuries.

Sessions typically last from 30 minutes to one hour and involve a detailed health history intake and a full body assessment. The practitioner aims to identify a strain pattern which runs through the body and is comprised of all the restrictions or compensations that the patient was unable to resolve without intervention. A priority of importance is placed on a few areas which the practitioner feels are the main culprits contributing to the presenting symptoms. Since the body is an integrated system this

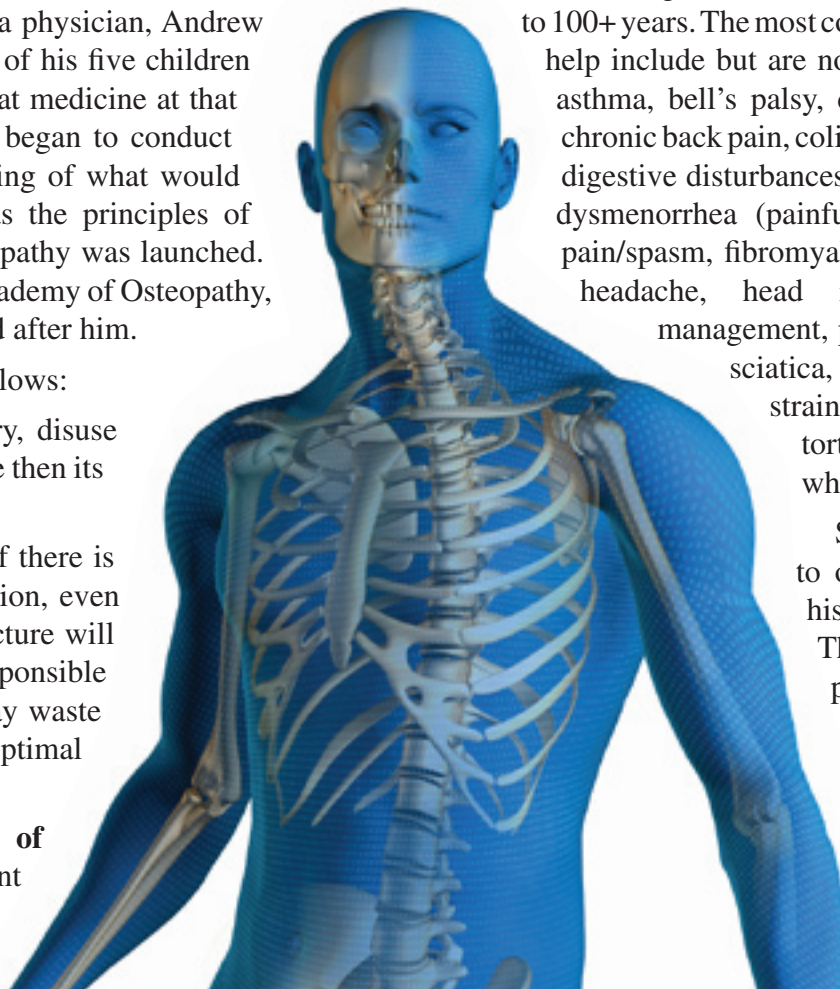
may or may not correspond to the area where pain or dysfunction arises. For this reason treatment may be focused on the foot, for example, of a patient who is experiencing migraines.

Osteopathy encompasses a diverse array of techniques meant to facilitate the body's inherent healing capacity. Osteopathy technique can be sub-divided into several categories:

- Visceral treatment
- Osteo-articular adjustment
- Fascial release
- Lymphatic drainage
- Strain/Counterstrain
- Muscle energy
- Cranial osteopathy
- General osteopathic treatment (GOT)

During treatment practitioners use their hands to remove restrictions. The pressure perceived by the patient ranges from very light (as in cranial technique) to a deeper but gentle joint mobilization (as in osteoarticular adjustment). Treatment frequency is low and depends on the response to initial treatment.

Osteopathy is an unregulated profession in Canada. Practitioners are required to finish five years of course work before entering into a two-year thesis program to graduate from the Canadian College of Osteopathy.



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