

# History of Osteopathy in America and Europe

## What is Osteopathy?

Osteopathy is a form of natural medicine that treats your body as a single functioning unit. Osteopathy is a branch of alternative medicine that is less intrusive and more effective than traditional Western medicine.

Osteopathy assesses and treats movement restrictions in your body tissues that prevent you from being healthy and fit. It is unique because it focuses on the root cause of pain and dysfunction rather than simply masking the symptoms. Western medicine typically focuses on treating the symptoms, and not the source of the ailment. It is an effective way of healing, because it doesn't prevent symptoms from returning or getting worse.

## What is the philosophy of Osteopath practitioners?

Preventing illness is the primary goal of any Osteopath practitioner. Osteopathic philosophy believes that physical problems should be treated as early as possible, in order to prevent further injury or other illness. The self-healing abilities of the body guide Osteopath practitioners in tailoring treatment to each client's needs and lifestyle.

Osteopathic medicine is a distinctive form of medical care founded on the philosophy that all body systems are interrelated and dependent upon one another for good health. This philosophy was developed in 1874 by Andrew Taylor Still, MD, (pictured) who pioneered the concept of "wellness" and recognized the importance of treating illness within the context of the whole body.

## About Osteopathic Medicine

Osteopathic medicine is a distinct form of medical practice in the United States.

Osteopathic medicine provides all of the benefits of modern medicine including prescription drugs, surgery, and the use of technology to diagnose disease and evaluate injury. It also offers the added benefit of hands-on diagnosis and treatment through a system of therapy known as osteopathic manipulative medicine. Osteopathic medicine emphasizes helping each person achieve a high level of wellness by focusing on health promotion and disease prevention.

## Beginnings

Osteopathic medicine was founded in the late 1800s in Kirksville, Missouri, by a medical doctor who recognized that the medical practices of the day often caused more harm than good. He focused on developing a system of medical care that would promote the body's innate ability to heal itself and called this system of medicine osteopathy, now known as osteopathic medicine.

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Osteopathic physicians, also known as DOs, work in partnership with their patients. They consider the impact that lifestyle and community have on the health of each individual, and they work to break down barriers to good health. DOs are licensed to practice the full scope of medicine in all 50 states. They practice in all types of environments, including the military, and in all types of specialties, from family medicine to obstetrics, surgery, and aerospace medicine.

## Osteopathic Philosophy

DOs are trained to look at the whole person from their first days of medical school, which means they see each person as more than just a collection of organ systems and body parts that may become injured or diseased. This holistic approach to patient care means that osteopathic medical students learn how to integrate the patient into the health care process as a partner. They are trained to communicate with people from diverse backgrounds, and they get the opportunity to practice these skills in their classrooms and learning laboratories, frequently with standardized and simulated patients.

## Strong Foundation in Primary Care

The osteopathic medical profession has a proud heritage of producing primary care practitioners. In fact, the mission statements of the majority of osteopathic medical schools state plainly that their purpose is the production of primary care physicians. Osteopathic medical tradition preaches that a strong foundation in primary care makes one a better physician, regardless of what specialty they may eventually practice.

Today, when the challenge of ensuring an adequate number of primary care physicians extends to osteopathic medicine, the majority of most osteopathic medical school graduates choose careers in primary care. Osteopathic medicine also has a special focus on providing care in rural and urban underserved areas, allowing DOs to have a greater impact on the U.S. population's health and well-being than their numbers would suggest. While DOs constitute 7 percent of all U.S. physicians, they are responsible for 16 percent of patient visits in communities with populations of fewer than 2,500.

Osteopathic medicine is also rapidly growing! Nearly one in five medical students in the United States is attending an osteopathic medical school.

## Curriculum

In addition to studying all of the typical subjects you would expect student physicians to master, osteopathic medical students take approximately 200 additional hours of training in the art of osteopathic manipulative medicine. This system of hands-on techniques helps alleviate pain, restores motion, supports the body's natural functions and influences the body's structure to help it function more efficiently.

One key concept osteopathic medical students learn is that structure influences function. Thus, if there is a problem in one part of the body's structure, function in that area, and possibly in other areas, may be affected. Another integral tenet of osteopathic medicine is the body's innate ability to heal itself. Many of osteopathic medicine's manipulative techniques are aimed at reducing or eliminating the impediments to

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proper structure and function so the self-healing mechanism can assume its role in restoring a person to health.

## About Osteopathy in Europe and Ontario, Canada

The practice of (non-medical) manual osteopathy is not currently recognized as a regulated health profession under the Ontario Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991, or any other legislation. There is no Act which defines a scope of practice for osteopathy. Regulated health care professions have a defined scope of practice under profession-specific Acts. Osteopathy educational programs in Europe where the practise of osteopathic manual practitioners is regulated and practitioners can legally use the title "osteopath". In addition to osteopathic physicians, who are regulated by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario.

The education needed to become an osteopathic physician is not available in Canada – these practitioners get their education in the United States from an osteopathic medical college or school, approved by the American Osteopathic Association. In Ontario, osteopathic physicians are licenced physicians that practice with an osteopathic philosophy and use manual osteopathy to varying degrees, depending on their education and training. Internships/residencies may be undertaken in the U.S., Canada or elsewhere according to requirements.

Osteopathic Manual Practitioner have extensive training in manual osteopathic practice, but they are not medical doctors and cannot prescribe medication, perform surgery or perform labour and delivery. They assess and treat patients using an osteopathic philosophy and manual techniques only. The education and clinical training needed to become an Osteopathic Manual Practitioner is available in Canada.

In Ontario, Osteopathic Manual Practitioners maintain, improve or restore the normal physiological function of interrelated body structures and systems, and, enhance the body's natural ability to health itself. They use various manual assessment and treatment techniques and modalities to help people of all ages and backgrounds who suffer injury, pain or other health concerns by easing the pain, reducing swelling, improving tissue mobility and promoting efficient healing. Restricted or constricted areas of the body – areas which are not moving normally. Osteopathic Manual Practitioners seek to identify and then gently ease the restrictions or constrictions so the body can function normally again.

Osteopathy is based on 4 basic principles:

1. Each structure in the body supports the body's functions. If a structure is damaged, out of place, or otherwise not working properly, the body will not function at its best.
2. The natural flow of the body's fluids – lymphatic, vascular, and neurological – must be preserved and maintained.
3. The human body is the sum of its parts. Its physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and cognitive systems don't work independently -they work in harmony.
4. When the body has no restrictions, it has the inherent ability to heal itself.

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5. Osteopathic Manual Practitioners recognize that a patient is an integrated whole. When all of the body's components are in balance, a person is complete and in total health.

## Conclusion:

The rest of the world, including Europe, Asia, Canada, and the countries of the southern hemisphere, has not adopted this medical model of Osteopathy. Instead their curriculum focuses primarily on the manual application of traditional osteopathic philosophy and principles. Israel may be an exception.

Both American osteopathic physicians and European osteopaths call themselves DOs. American practitioners are Doctors of Osteopathic Medicine, and European practitioners have a Diploma of Osteopathy. There is, thus, some confusion regarding the difference between U.S osteopathic physicians and osteopaths trained in other countries.

Osteopathy as practiced in the United States in the late 1800s was exported to Europe, and spread to the rest of the world. Treatment highlighted the musculoskeletal manipulation developed by U.S. osteopathic physicians (and not practiced by allopathic physicians). To this day, osteopaths (the term used for foreign-trained practitioners who practice osteopathic manipulation) are not physicians. Their training focuses on the musculoskeletal system and they are not licensed to prescribe medications or perform surgeries. They are trained primarily in the practice of osteopathic manipulative techniques.

Conversely, U.S. trained osteopathic physicians practice the entire scope of modern medicine, bringing a patient-centered, holistic, hands-on approach to diagnosing and treating illness and injury. U.S. DOs can choose any specialty, prescribe drugs, perform surgeries, and practice medicine anywhere in the United States. They bring the additional benefits of osteopathic manipulative techniques to diagnose and treat patients.