

International History of Manual Osteopathy

By: Mo Qu

For: Course TH 980 (Investigative Project)

Date: June 29, 2011

Manual osteopathy is an established, recognized system of treatment that lays its main emphasis on the structural integrity of the body. It is a branch of manual medicine that follows the philosophy that the body is a whole system. Manual osteopaths are trained in palpation and manual techniques to treat various illnesses and dysfunctions. They believe that the body has the ability to heal itself and the role of manual osteopath is the facilitator in that process.

The History of manual osteopathy to the present time is inseparably connected with the life of Dr. Andrew Taylor Still. Andrew Taylor Still, M.D. was born in Virginia in 1828, the son of a physician who was also a Methodist minister. In his early years, his education was interrupted when his father was transferred to various parts of the Midwest. Andrew assisted his father in both his ministerial and medical duties. It was during that time that Dr. Still decided to take up the practice of medicine under the guidance of his father.

Dr. Andrew Still studied the current texts on anatomy, physiology, pathology, surgery, the standard of conventional medical education for the rural American physician of the day. At that time, the understanding of disease was crude and based on vague notions of "physiological tension" which needed to be relieved by puking, purging, blood letting and heroic doses of morphine, opium, alcohol and mercury. The early Dr. Still tolerated these short-comings but began to publicly voice his doubts about the current therapies. Always fascinated by the human anatomy and the science of healing, Dr. Still took another look at the way things were being done in medicine and pursued a better way. During the American civil war, Still served as an army surgeon and sustained spinal and abdominal injuries. During his experiences in surgery, he observed adhesions, restrictions of motion and congestion of diseased organs. Dr. Still sought a non-surgical means of breaking down these adhesions. During the years 1865 to 1870 Dr Still gradually reestablished his medical practice relying on a

system of manipulation and spinal reflexes that he devised to treat all types of conditions. Despite his therapeutic successes he was viewed as a medical heretic.

Dr Still set up a practice in Kirksville, Missouri. It was at that time, that he conceived a seminal thought: The human body has much in common with a highly complex machine, one which ought to function well if it is mechanically sound. There, he saved many lives during an epidemic of infectious diarrhea, without the use of drugs. However, despite this success his reputation as an eccentric followed him and he was shunned by most until he cured a prominent Presbyterian minister's crippled daughter.

The Birth of Osteopathy

In 1874 Dr Still announced to the world the founding of his new medical science which he called Osteopathy. It is a naturalistic, vitalistic, and holistic approach to health and disease based on the idea that man is not a collection of parts but a synthetic whole imbued with spirit. The body functions as a total unit and possesses self-healing and self-regulating mechanisms. Manual osteopathy maintains that there is a reciprocal relationship between structure and function. Namely, that an alteration in structure (the musculoskeletal system) through injury will result in a change in function (an internal organ) and hence disease. Likewise, a diseased internal organ will result in an alteration in the musculoskeletal system.

During the 1880's he continued to refine his science and made several attempts to train others. On November 1, 1892 the American School of Osteopathy was opened. The forward thinking was that Dr Still admitted five women to the first class and was later reported to have said that he thought women made better osteopaths than men. After one year, Dr Still determined that for the most part his experiment at teaching osteopathy was a failure. However, in 1893, he did receive some confirmation that his method could be learned when two of his

son's accepted an invitation to practice in Minnesota and saved many lives during a black diphtheria epidemic. Slowly, the curriculum improved, more and better students graduated and an infirmary was built in 1895 and in that year Dr Still and his students had performed thirty thousand osteopathic treatments. By the late 1890's his school, infirmary and new surgical hospital were increasingly successful both academically and financially. He continued some direct patient care and taught his philosophical principles to his students leaving the instruction of anatomy, physiology, biochemistry, histology and clinical practice to his hand-picked faculty.

In the 1870's, in America, this holistic perspective was heresy. Dr Still spent many hours alone studying anatomy both from books and cadavers. He was a natural born healer who revealed to one of his students toward the end of his life that he was able to see the human aura, the human energy field. In many ways osteopathy was Dr Still's unique synthesis of his personal experience and several major intellectual and philosophical movements making their way across America during his life time. His notion of the healing effects is that osteopathic treatment could relieve the restrictions to the free flow of blood and nerve power by removing the bony dislocations and muscle contractions. Dr Still, an amateur inventor, was fascinated with machines and had a near-perfect knowledge of human anatomy from his many years of self study. He viewed disease as an effect of the various derangements from the anatomical perfection. At the beginning of the 20th century, one of Dr. Still's students, Dr. William Garner Sutherland discovered the "cranial rhythm" (a natural motion of the cranio-sacral unit). He realized that this rhythm was disturbed by tensions in the body and could be restored by various gentle cranial techniques.

Osteopathy after Dr Still in America

The history of osteopathy to this point is in many ways the personal history of the Still family. However, the history of Osteopathy over the next eighty years is intimately intertwined with the unfolding of American economic, sociological, political and philosophical thought. As manual osteopathy grew, political and legislative battles were fought and won. Today, in all fifty states osteopathic licensure is equivalent to that of conventional physicians. Organized osteopathy had to battle the powerful American Medical Association which sought to maintain its monopolistic hold on American Medicine. It wasn't until the Vietnam War that doctors of osteopathic medicine were allowed to serve their country as physicians. Today there are 19 osteopathic medicine colleges in America. Some are state supported schools where faculty and facilities are shared with allopathic students. Osteopathic physicians can practice in all medical and surgical specialties through osteopathic or allopathic board certification. Doctors of Osteopathic medicine now serve in all branches of the military and government health service organizations in America.

However, with equality comes paradox. As the osteopathic curriculum improved over the years it became more like conventional medicine. As these became more advanced and practical, the use of medications was introduced into the osteopathic curriculum. As a result, osteopathy in the United States evolved towards the practice of medicine and surgery leaving behind traditional osteopathy based on palpation and manual therapeutic methods. Today there are approximately 35,000 osteopathic physicians in the U.S. yet only about 500 osteopaths practice the original healing art with some osteopaths using manipulation as an adjunct to their conventional practices.

Osteopathy in Other Countries

In 1917, Osteopathy took root in Europe thanks to Dr. Martin Littlejohn, DO, a student of Dr. Still and a professor at his osteopathic school. Dr. Littlejohn moved back to England and founded the British School of Osteopathy, which is still active today and subsequently expanded the practice of osteopathy to Europe..

In France, the origin of osteopathy has been traced back to 1923. Most notable in his contribution was an osteopath by the name of Jean-Pierre Barral, D.O. who pioneered the treatment of the 'visceral' systems. Such European osteopathic traditions provided significant contributions thereby expanding the art and science of manual osteopathy.

In the early 1900's, some of the American osteopaths moved to Canada to practice. They were given limited medical practice rights; these individuals were registered under the Drugless Practitioners Act i.e. they were not allowed to prescribe drugs or perform surgery like the traditional medical practitioners. However the present osteopaths from American universities are given full practice rights in Canada.

In 1981, Phillippe Druelle, D.O. from France founded the first school in Canada, the Collège d'Études Ostéopathiques (CEO) in Montreal, Quebec. Ten years later, the Canadian College of Osteopathy (CCO) was established based on the parent school in Montreal. In addition to the original school in Montreal, Canadian College of Osteopathy teaches in Quebec City, Toronto, Halifax and Vancouver. The lineage of Traditional Osteopaths can be traced directly to the faculty of the Canadian College of Osteopathy. In particular, renowned Osteopaths such as Thomas Schooley, DO (deceased), Anne Wales, DO, (who was still actively treating in her 97th year), Viola Frymann, DO, and Denis Brooks, DO (deceased), have all either been instructors of the

college's experienced faculty over the last twenty years. These Osteopaths were all students of Dr. William Garner Sutherland who was a student of A.T. Still's 1900 graduating class.

National Academy of Osteopathy, based in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, founded in 2010 by the world famous osteopath, Dr Shahin Pourgol, in a period of less than one year has become the most potent tool in expansion of manual osteopathy worldwide. As of June 2011; National Academy of Osteopathy teaches manual osteopathy in thirty three cities in nineteen countries total. These countries include Canada, USA, China, Taiwan, Iran, Mexico, Venezuela, Brazil, Dominican Republic, Portugal, Spain, Italy, Germany, Netherlands, Turkey, South Korea, Japan, France, and Greece. The courses are taught in English. Starting September 2011 the manual osteopathy program offered in Tehran, Iran will be in Farsi language. This is the first time manual osteopathy is being taught in Persian language.

National Academy of Osteopathy was established to help patients everywhere have access to manual osteopathy services. Now this is becoming more and more possible for people everywhere to be able to visit manual osteopaths.

Osteopathy Boards

The first osteopathy board was established in the USA; followed by England, France, Australia and New Zealand. Canadian Manual Osteopathy Examining Board is the last osteopathic board that was set up (in North York, Ontario).

Licensing

Manual osteopaths receive certificate of registration and a license number from International Osteopathic Association. With this license number manual osteopaths are eligible to bill certain insurance companies that

provide osteopathy coverage for their policy holders. The certificate of registration from International Osteopathic Association allows manual osteopaths to work in many countries and jurisdictions including all states of USA, all provinces of Canada, China, Iran, Guyana, Venezuela, Colombia, Spain, France, Italy, UAE, Kuwait, etc.

Today the original manual osteopathic concept is still powerful and has made a lasting impression on medicine throughout the world. Osteopathic and conventional basic science research has validated and confirmed many of Dr Still's original ideas. Today even the conventional medical world has many manual medicine societies and the specialties of Physiatry and Rehabilitation Medicine benefit from much of Dr Still's pioneering work.