

HOW TO ACHIEVE SUCCESS AS A MANUAL OSTEOPATH

By: Jerome White

Student

National Academy of Osteopathy

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Instructor: Professor Shahin Pourgol, DC, DMO, CDTT, CCE, DCMOEB

Manual osteopathy is a discipline of manual therapy that is fairly new to the Canadian healthcare system. It is one of the more effective and fastest rising approaches to treating a plethora of ailments and injuries. It can also be a very lucrative career choice for a healthcare practitioner.

As this profession lends itself easily to the benefit and well being of those seeking treatment, there are a number of ways to become successful as a manual osteopath.

Osteopathy was founded in 1874 by Missouri medical physician Dr. Andrew Taylor Still who believed that the doctor's role in fighting disease was to restore the body's proper musculoskeletal function. Dr. Still founded the American School of Osteopathy in Missouri in 1892, offering classes in manual manipulation, nutrition, and lifestyle adjustments to treat ailments and injuries.

Manual osteopathy is health care discipline that incorporates manual palpation and osteopathic therapy combined with biomechanical, orthopaedic and neurological clinical assessment in assessing and treating the physical body's structure to promote proper physiological functioning. It is an approach to health care that focuses on the patient as opposed to the disease, and is often referred to as a holistic healing method that uses manipulation of joints and tissues in order to achieve the desired result.

Manual osteopathy is primarily used for the treatment of neuro-musculo-skeletal disorders such as back and neck pain, sciatica, sporting injuries and postural strain. It does so by improving structural balance, which assists in restoring peak physiological performance. It can be used to relieve chronic tension symptoms as well as muscle tension.

The benefits for people opting for this type of therapy include circulation improvement, increased joint flexibility, and reduction of physical and mental fatigue.

With a rise in the average number health conscious Canadians manual osteopathy is becoming more of a mainstream form of therapy. As the benefits offered by insurers increase, it is expected that manual osteopathy will be more commonly included in the treatments covered.

Manual osteopaths are often employed by physician's owning practices, hospitals, and partnered with physiotherapists. A well respected discipline in the Wellness industry, manual osteopathy is slowly being introduced to corporate employees by major insurance companies such as Sun Life, Canada Life, and Holman Insurance.

There are many ways to achieve success as an manual osteopath.

Many manual osteopaths pursue opening their own businesses, either in private practice or by starting their own clinic hiring practitioners of other medical related backgrounds.

In order to attain a lucrative living as an manual osteopath, intensive schooling is required. Tuition fees are often \$9,000 to \$20,000.

Proper research of the school selected is highly recommended. Among other reasons, this is to ensure that the chosen school is accredited. Some of the accredited and more reputable schools include The

Canadian College of Osteopathy, The Osteopathic College of Ontario, and The National Academy of Osteopathy. Studying at an accredited institution will certify that the education obtained is recognized by potential employers and other learning institutions alike. Most educational facilities will require a base set of courses to be completed in order to graduate. The average curriculum for Osteopathic studies includes:

- Human Anatomy
- Systems Physiology
- Osteopathy Principals and Professional Ethics
- Business Practices
- Clinical Biomechanics
- Manual Osteopathy Skills/Techniques
- Clinical Pathology
- Orthopaedics
- Diagnosis and Symptomology
- Neurology
- Nutrition
- Therapeutic Exercise
- Clinical Psychology

It should also be expected that clinical practical hours be completed as well as the submission of an investigative research project, or "thesis", as part of the graduation requirements.

On a profession level, manual osteopathy requires insurance and a license in order to practice. Obtaining a license to legally practice manual osteopathy will involve the successful completion of a board examination and the acquiring of membership to one of the Osteopathy associations, such as the International Osteopathic Association. The requirements for the legal practice of manual osteopathy is similar for all Canadian provinces.

Manual osteopathy can provide people with a greater sense of well being. A successful manual osteopath should genuinely be interested in promoting the health of well being of others along with the proposition of generating a great income. Successful manual osteopaths will also commonly be knowledgeable and interested in alternative and natural health. Success in this field will take dedication and commitment to the profession.

Pursuing education in Healthcare is a lifelong process. To achieve success, it is best to enhance your career by learning new osteopathic techniques. Within the scope of practice, trigger point therapy, myofascial release, and Swedish Massage may be added to increase marketability and earning potential.

When the appropriate level of education is acquired, the therapist should then be prepared to educate the patient on where the additional techniques may benefit them and how.

Education in modalities such as Ultrasound, Interferential Current, and Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation will allow an Osteopath to broaden their scope of practice by adding to the available approaches they can take to treating clients when an investment in these devices is made. Continuing Education courses in the use of these modalities are available at most Health Science learning institutions, such as the physiotherapy course offer by the National Academy of Osteopathy.

Identifying a target market that you specialize in treating is another effective way to enhance your career and increase your earning potential. This will allow you to capitalize on a particular community or demographic and develop an area of expertise.

Manual osteopathy is a physically demanding profession, as it requires a lot of movement and pressure application from the practitioner. It is for this reason that a manual osteopath to maintain a level of physical fitness sufficient for servicing their clients.

This profession is more than just relieving pain by the effective applying of techniques. Paperwork is also a very important aspect of this career, involving intake forms, history taking and clinical files. A practitioner must be able to effectively distribute their time, making sure there is enough time for both the treatment, and the paperwork. Proficient time management skills are therefore, necessary for success.

The average salary of a manual osteopath can be anywhere from \$30 per hour to \$90,000 a year. Important factors affecting this include location, treatment resources, and client base.

Experience is a key component in increasing the income of a manual osteopath. This helps develop a positive reputation, which will likely lead to what is referred to as "word of mouth" advertising; a free form of promoting for your practice.

Many Osteopathy Schools, such as the National Academy of Osteopathy, offer students in-clinic internships, providing them with hands on experience, and a base of support as they learn while practicing. This serves as the foundation for experience. Any other work experience pertaining to Osteopathy acquired after graduation will only assist in the preparation of opening a private practice.

Investment funds are a vital part of any successful business. In the case of an Osteopath, these funds are needed in order to purchase the advertising and treatment supplies, as well as appropriate treatment equipment for your practice.

The following basic equipment and treatment supplies represent fundamental items for any successful clinic:

- Treatment tables and table paper
- Chairs
- Stools
- Shelves
- Blankets/sheets and/or towels
- Hand sanitizer
- Treatment lotion and/or oil
- Pillows/pillow cases
- Cleaning agents

The quality of the treatment table is of great importance, as this contributes to the comfort and overall experience of the patient. Tables should have adjustable height and headrest.

Tables should also have sufficient foam. This allows for proper cushioning. The table should be sturdy and durable; able to endure all kind of conditions. It is suggested to make a proper investment here, as the treatment table is one of the more important items that will be purchased by an Osteopath. It should be noted that a table that comes with a satisfactory warranty should be sought.

Investing in additional products that promote home care and maintenance that you can market and sell to your clients is an easy way to earn additional income as an Osteopath.

These products commonly include compression socks, and orthotic insoles.

Creating a soothing atmosphere for your patients is crucial in retaining their business. This will affect how they view their experience at your practice and will have an impact on their decision to continue being treated by you. Relaxing sounds and a pleasant but light scent that smells more clean than fragrant, will be helpful in making the experience enjoyable for your clientele.

Personal hygiene is just as important in making for a pleasant experience for your clients. While the environment is preferred to be sterile and clean smelling, the therapist also should smell clean and have a cleanly, tidy appearance. Personal upkeep such as hair, fingernails, and oral maintenance is important for these reasons. The same applies to employees of your practice or clinic. Other therapists or receptionists employed by your business should always be presentable and have a professional appearance.

Location is a key aspect in determining how well your practice will do. The best locations are those within a short distance of your chosen target market. A successful practice should be situated in an area that is convenient and easily accessible, and that offers parking for your clients. Locations within short range of other major businesses are also very beneficial as they attract more potential clientele.

The office space itself should be spacious and have enough room for the products and equipment to be laid out without being in the way of patients or employees. Clients should be comfortable and have ample space in which to move about.

In order to become and remain competitive, it is best to market your practice as unique. Your business should have a statistic, service, or reputation that separates your business from that of your competitors. "Canada's only", or "Toronto's largest", "the first", "the leading", and other distinguishable descriptions are all ways people can differentiate between your practice and the others. A service offered by your clinic that is not offered by any of the competitive clinics will attract potential patients looking for that service, allowing you to capitalize on that particular market of people. Therein lies the importance diversifying your business and setting yourself apart from the competition.

The name of your practice should briefly describe your practice, giving consumers at least a basic idea of how they may benefit from your service. It should be interesting enough to stimulate intrigue and curiosity about your business, tempting potential clients to enquire about it.

As Osteopathy is only now beginning to become more main stream, there are many people who know nothing about it, or who have never heard of it. When approached by a potential patient enquiring about your practice, it is of the utmost important to educate them on what you do as an Osteopath and how they will benefit from it. They must be informed of what you will be doing as their therapist, and how they will feel as a result of it. It is this time that you can also advise them on what you specialize in, and develop a niche within the healthcare community. When considering any form of therapy in the healthcare field, consumers will often prefer details rather than general information, so it is best to provide as much information as possible. This also shows the client that you are honest and builds the trust aspect of your rapport with them. This is to be considered when creating leaflets and brochures for advertising your practice.

Brochures are essential to the success of your business. They not only provide the consumer with information on your practice so they can make an informed decision, they also give the consumer time to think about the decision to try your service. This prevents them from completely forgetting your business in the event that they are not ready to make an immediate decision.

As such, brochures should be as professional as possible. This requires high quality paper and printing, as well as an innovative and creative design. A brochure is often considered a direct reflection of your business. when creating your brochures.

It should explain the treatments and modalities you are skilled in and what your areas of expertise are. The benefits of these treatments and modalities should be simplified and concise. Patients should know

what expectations they should have of the treatment session and what it will do for them. They should also be clear on how each form of treatment will address their needs.

When preparing to book a potential client, there are a variety of sales techniques that can be used to solidify the booking. A very effective one is known as the "scarcity tactic". This tactic is used to suggest to the potential patient that appointments are very limited, and therefore, the longer they take to confirm their booking, the less of a chance they have of getting an appointment. This gives the impression that your practice is busy and that your business is doing well. A business that is doing well will always be more attractive to consumers than those that achieve mediocre success. To enhance this impression, double booking clients is a wise strategy. Patients will not mind waiting for a service that they perceive to be in high demand; that they perceive to be the best.

A key component in keeping an Osteopathy practice successful is to gain the clients trust. If they don't believe the establishment is of an honest nature, they are less likely to return.

Once return clients have developed and seek repeat business, it is natural for them to refer others to your business this should also be encouraged by the therapist. By rewarding this type of client with special offers such as discounts or other incentives, their loyalty will be solidified.

The more information gained on the client, the better that appropriate treatment can be selected and provided for them. Proper use of client history is tantamount ineffectively treating health issues that are specific to each patient. Effective client-therapist communication is of crucial importance for this very reason. While patient history should be taken at the beginning of every visit, the therapist should observe the client's behaviour and manner of speaking to better to determine what approach they can handle for that day. The attention given to this also show the patient that you are genuinely interested in their well being. Providing them with at home care does this as well.

Courtesy goes a long with retaining client too. Simply thanking the patient for their visiting your establishment and welcoming them to come back for their next visit also builds loyalty. Loyal clients will want to see your practice do well, and will look forward to telling others of the great serviced they've received. A happy patient will always be happy to refer their friends and family to your business.

The initial impression is paramount in retaining a potential patient. A pleasant first impression ensures that even if their business isn't gained initially, they may just consider it for a later date.

As previously stated, convenience is of great importance for any successful business. Service should be offered during hours that the average consumer can commit to without being inconvenienced. This makes it easier for them to attend appointments, thus, making it easier for the therapist to book and confirm appointments with them. The more accommodating your business is for the client, the better for the business.

Effective clientele development is essential to the growth of lucrative profit. Successful marketing requires continued work and is an ongoing process.

The most common forms of marketing for a private healthcare practice are as follows:

- Brochures/Leaflets
- Business cards
- Direct mailings
- Displays
- Health and Wellness Fairs
- Internet Advertising
- Newspaper
- Networking with other people
- Yellow Pages
- Press releases
- Radio ads
- Signage
- Television ads
- Article writing and marketing

Another way to market your business is to offer complimentary treatments in the form of "free demonstrations". This will allow potential customers to sample the benefits of Osteopathy so they see first-hand how it will enhance their well being. The therapist may contact the human resources department of local office buildings that have companies as tenants, and offer a complimentary demonstration for their employees in which they will be able to try some of the services offered at your clinic. Alternatively, the therapist may also invite employees to their clinic for the same purpose of free demonstration. Those interested in treatment may be offered a special introductory rate, and additional special offers as incentives for bringing their friends and family members.

It is also a great idea to tally the success of each marketing method to determine which options to invest more time and money into.

As Osteopathy is still emerging as a wellness and healthcare discipline, an Osteopath should be skilled in techniques that complement Osteopathy. Mentioned earlier, Swedish Massage is a form of therapy that complements the benefits of Osteopathic techniques.

This form of treatment works on treating deep and superficial muscles, muscle attachments, ligaments, and connective, and was created by Swedish gym instructor Pehr Henrik Ling at the Royal Central Institute of Gymnastics.

There are five different types of strokes that are incorporated with Swedish Massage, most of which require Oil or lotion to be effective.

- Effleurage – This is a gliding stroke is generally the first stroke applied, and is often used for lubricant application. This stroke can also be used for detecting muscles hypertonicity (tightness) and trigger points. This technique is to be performed proximally, distally, and always ending proximally again to ensure continuous blood flow to the client's heart as you apply the strokes. Effleurage can help to remove toxins from the body. This stroke can be deep or superficial dependent upon the clients health, and follows the contours of the client's body. It is performed with one or both hands, and is used over the entire area that is being massaged.
- Petrissage – This is a kneading stroke. It entails grasping and lifting the clients soft tissue, squeezing and releasing it. Repeat the process for the affected area. This stroke has to be performed in a slow and firm manner.

This kneading stroke disposes of toxins and waste from the soft tissues. Blood along with oxygen replaces it and provides nourishment.

- Friction – This technique is often used to break down scar tissue and adhesions in soft tissue. The fingers compress the affected area and move in opposing directions, crossing each other with steady pressure.
- Vibration – This stroke is essentially the shaking of the soft tissue and can be done in one of three ways: rocking, coarse, or fine. It can involve a slow or fast rhythmic pace of the fingertips or hands. This is performed to increase circulation and evoke relaxation. Fine vibrations stimulate the digestive system. Coarse vibrations, also known as jostling. Helps to loosen muscles and joints.
- Tapotement – Often referred to as a light blow or touch, this stroke has a rhythmic method in which the either the edge of the palm or the heel of the hand used to stimulate and relieve cramped muscles.
- Trigger Point Release – These points are also used in acupuncture and can be found near muscular areas of the body in axial muscles, (muscles are responsible for side to side body movement). Trigger points can also be found in more than one location of the body. A trigger point by definition is a taut band of palpable muscle that may be irritable, cause pain, and illicit a referral pain pattern. The location of pain is called a reference zone. The pain in these areas is usually deep and it can be continuous, or intermittent.

There are two types of trigger points, active and latent. Active points consist of nagging pain. Latent points don't experience pain until the affected area is pressed.

Trigger point therapy is currently one of the most popular soft tissue therapy treatments.

During a treatment session an examination focusing on identifying the pain area and where discomfort is being felt, is conducted.

The client has to be relaxed in order for the treatment to be successful. The therapist can recognize the trigger points as they will be tender, hard or knotted.

After the therapist has located a trigger point, they apply a cycle of three sets of ischemic compressions, during which the trigger point is depressed until it is released and the pain level reduces, taking no longer than one minute. This is also an effective method for relieving muscle spasms and cramps.

Being educated on these types of related techniques will increase the number of treatment a therapist can offer, which increases their marketability, thereby increase their earning potential.

Athletes would greatly benefit from Osteopathy as having regular sports related treatments would naturally give them an advantage over their competitors.

Professional athletes from all sports will appreciate the benefits of receiving Osteopathic treatments. An Osteopath may implement Trigger Point Release, Muscle Energy Technique, and Proprioceptive Neuromuscular Facilitation stretching in their treatment plan to increase the athletes' flexibility and their overall ability to compete.

Sports provide a therapist with a strong target market in which they could specialize and develop a niche.

Since there are many athletes in different sports, the techniques are going to be different. The therapist should familiarize themselves with the sport in question, while paying close attention to the differences in the athletes they will be working with.

If the athlete is injured, they will require special attention. An injured athlete would need to avoid stretching the affected area during the acute stage as this may cause further damage.

If athletes have sore muscles, a relaxation massage will be very beneficial to them as this will alleviate soreness. Joint mobilization will reduce the tightness associated with high levels of activity.

Osteopaths employed by athletes or sports teams will likely travel with them when they go on the road. They are considered to be part of the team. They will be responsible for providing treatment prior to and after competitions, and during practice days.

An Osteopath working with athletes will encounter more scar tissue and trigger point than general patients due to the physical nature of sports.

The therapist needs to know where trigger points will frequently form on the athletes of specific sports so that they can treat them quickly and adequately.

Here is also where the Osteopaths knowledge of sports nutrition is put to use. Athletes should be encouraged by the therapist to follow a diet plan that will include elements that will help to prevent joint and muscle soreness, cramps, tightness, and injury, assist in quick recovery if the athlete is suffering from any of those conditions. Vitamins and minerals of great importance to an athletes' performance, as is hydration, and both should be promoted by the therapist.

Massage techniques should be short quick strokes, and treatment should be designed to stimulate nerves and energize muscles. This may include tapping, pincement and other forms of tapotement.

The Osteopaths knowledge and skill level in performing techniques will determine the reputation of the therapist and may lead to recommendations to other athletes and teams alike. With enough experience and positive results, an Osteopath can acquire famous athletes, politicians, actors and other high profile celebrities as clients, and work their way to a six figure income.

When seeking employment by athletes or sports teams, volunteering your services at sporting events is a good strategy. This is a good way for the therapists to build rapport and establish themselves as an integral part of the team. Once a relationship is formed with one or more athletes, this is another scenario where introductory rates and other incentives may be offered to the athletes to attract them to your business.

Another area of treatment that a therapist can specialize in is prenatal care (or pregnancy treatment). This form of therapy requires specific positioning, as the expectant mother's body must be placed a certain way.

Pillows and padding are used for support and to maintain safety for both the mother, and unborn child. Any massage performed on a pregnant client should be administered after the first trimester has ended.

For the pregnant clients, treatments should be designed to relieve stress, joint and muscle pains and reduce arm and leg swelling.

A prenatal treatment also helps to relieve back pain. Back pain for an expectant mother usually comes from the extra weight that they carry with the unborn child. This is a good alternative for certain painkillers that can be damaging to the fetus.

This is yet another target market that an aspiring Osteopath can take advantage of on their way to achieving success.

As a fairly new discipline to the Canadian healthcare system, Osteopathy is one of the most effective and fastest rising therapies for treating a plethora of ailments and injuries. It can also be a very lucrative career choice for a healthcare practitioner, and there are a number of ways by which this can happen. The keys variables in achieving success as an Osteopath remain to seek the best education, secure a great location, diversify your practice by increasing your skill set, and marketing your business with maximum effectiveness.