

An Overview of Osteopathic Manipulation Techniques

The wide spectrum of osteopathic manipulation techniques focuses on the principle that body structure and function are interdependent, interrelated and in continuous interaction. When structure is altered in the musculoskeletal system, abnormalities occur in other body systems. This, in turn, can produce restriction of motion, tenderness, tissue changes and asymmetry.

Following are some of the manipulation procedures most commonly used by osteopathic physicians to diagnose and treat somatic dysfunction:

Hands - On Contact

The value of the placing of hands on a patient is universally acknowledged by health professionals. This essential component of the doctor-patient relationship has a great deal to do with the patient's well being, whether he or she suffers from a cold or a terminal disease. When the physician examines a patient by auscultation of the chest or palpation of the abdomen or spine, the treatment already has begun.

Cranial Osteopathy

Inside the skull or cranium there is a covering over the brain, the dura, that continues down inside the spine to the tailbone or sacrum, protecting and supporting the central nervous system. This central nervous system controls the functioning of every organ, muscle and nerve in the body. Cranial Osteopathy is a systematic approach to patient diagnosis and treatment utilizing the body's inherent, third wave impulse, emanating from the central nervous system and the fluctuation of cerebrospinal fluid. This is called Cranial Rhythmic Impulse (CRI). This gentle, manual technique uses the CRI to treat the whole person, emphasizing the head and spinal regions.

"The cerebro-spinal fluid is one of the highest known elements that are contained in the body, and unless the brain furnishes this fluid in abundance, a disabled condition of the body will remain. He who is able to reason will see that this great river of life must be tapped and the withering field irrigated at once, or the harvest of health be forever lost."

A.T. Still M.D.

Biodynamic Osteopathy

“The foundation of this method is set upon the therapeutic powers of the Dynamic Stillness, the Breath of Life, the tidal potency, fluids and other Natural Laws at work supporting and generating life. No specific “technique” is applied other than full cooperation with the composite of the Living Mechanism and its intention within the moment. It is not about bones, or levers, or palpation. It is not about balanced membranous or ligamentous articular tension; these approaches are a different composite. It is about the Tide at work as the primary source of diagnosis and treatment with no application of force to Osteopathic lesions or psycho-emotional systems. Within the Dynamic Stillness we are healed without process or time. From the Breath of Life a new living matrix is created in each moment. The Tide brings us the power of Life and “feeds” us. The fluids respond, lawfully balancing the power of life and skillfully “driving” the continuum towards perfect proportion”.

Excerpts from James Jealous, DO, founder of the Biodynamic Study Program.

Soft - Tissue Technique

This procedure is commonly applied to the musculature surrounding the spine, and consists of a rhythmic stretching, deep pressure and traction. Its purpose is to move tissue fluids (edema) and to relax hypertonic muscles and myofascial (fibrous tissue) layers associated with somatic dysfunction.

Myofascial Release

This procedure is designed to treat primarily the myofascial structures. In the use of direct myofascial release treatment (MRT) a restrictive barrier is engaged for the myofascial tissues; the tissue is loaded with a constant force until release occurs. In treating with indirect MRT the dysfunctional tissues are guided along a path of least resistance until free movement is achieved.

Lymphatic Technique

This manual procedure is designed to promote circulation of the lymphatic fluids and can be used to relieve upper and lower respiratory infections. One technique is pressure applied with the physician's hands to the prone patient's upper anterior chest wall. When the force applied to the chest reaches its maximum on expiration, the physician's hands are removed suddenly. This increases negative pressure of the chest to assist the body's respiratory mechanism to move lymphatic fluids.

Muscle Energy Technique

In this manual technique the patient is directed to use his or her muscles from a precise position and in a specific direction against counter force applied by the physician. The purpose is to restore motion, decrease muscle/tissue changes and modify asymmetry of somatic dysfunction.