

Evidence Brief: Osteopathy

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Produced by the HEE Knowledge Management team Evidence Briefs offer a quick overview of the published reports, research, and evidence on a workforce-related topic.

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Key publications – the big picture

[Quick guide to osteopathy as a workforce supply solution](#), Institute of Osteopathy and Health Education England, 2022
This quick guide is designed to support the clinical leads, workforce leads, operational managers and any senior leaders who are involved in workforce development in NHS provider departments to understand the value that osteopaths can bring to productive NHS services and facilitate best use of the multi-professional workforce.

[The Allied Health Professions \(AHPs\) Strategy for England](#), NHS England, 2022
This strategy is a catalyst for change. Wherever you work, every member of our AHP community has a part in realising our collective ambitions through its delivery. I therefore encourage you to take a moment to consider how the AHP community can enable the change required to deliver future care today.

[Introducing Osteopaths to Primary Care, The role of the First Contact Practitioner](#), Institute of Osteopathy, 2020
The First Contact Practitioner (FCP) role is a key component of the NHS Long Term Plan (NHS England, 2019), which aims to integrate primary and secondary care services to improve accuracy of referrals and reduce the burden of musculoskeletal (MSK) health (among other goals).

[The Role of Osteopaths as Allied Health Professionals in the NHS](#), Institute of Osteopathy, 2020
Osteopathy's educational and regulatory institutions and processes are robust and mature but not always well understood outside the profession. NHS organisations could take a number of simple steps immediately to show osteopaths that their work is recognised and their role valued, especially given the shortage of allied health professionals (AHPs).

[General Osteopathic Council Annual Report 2021-22](#)

The General Osteopathic Council (GOsC) has a statutory duty under the Osteopaths Act 1993 to develop and regulate the osteopathy profession in the UK in order to ensure public protection.

Case Studies

[Communication strategies in psychologically informed osteopathic practice: A case report](#), 2022

This paper presents qualitative data from communication between an osteopath and patient participating in a research study to develop a new psychologically informed pain management course.

[WVSOM Anatomy Lab Tour Program: An Osteopathic Medicine Pipeline With Student Teaching Opportunities](#), 2019

The authors present this case study of the WVSOM Anatomy Lab Tour Program to establish a baseline for the collection of information gained through participant surveys to assess the impact of the program on learners and student teachers.

HEE Star

More resources and tools are available in the AHP Quick Reference Guides Upskilling section of the [HEE Star](#). Alternatively, search for 'Allied Health' in the search bar.

Statistics

[Osteopathy, Professional Census 2021 By the Institute of Osteopathy](#)

Though the gender balance of those that responded to the Census was biased towards female respondents (M 36% : F 63% compared with the true ratio in the profession of M 49% : F 51%), a weighted analysis indicated that this had less than a 1% influence on the answers to other questions, suggesting that these results remain representative.

[General Osteopathic Council](#)

- There are 5,341 osteopaths on the UK Statutory Register of Osteopaths (at 1 March 2019). Of these, 2,631 are male and 2,710 are female.
- The majority of osteopaths are aged between 31 and 50, although the profession includes all ages between 21 and 80.
- Although osteopaths practise in all countries of the United Kingdom, the greatest number are to be found in England (4,568). The rest are in Scotland (155), Wales (143), Northern Ireland (29), and outside the UK (446).

HEE National Data Programme

HEE staff can look at the [National Data Warehouse \(NDL\)](#) SharePoint site to find out more about datasets and Tableau products.

Published Peer Reviewed Research

Leadership, coaching and education

[Does the student-led osteopathy clinical learning environment prepare students for practice? 2022](#)

Clinical educators perceived that the student-led osteopathy clinical learning environment develops pre-professional learners to meet some, but not all, of the capabilities for professional practice as an osteopath.

[Evaluating the impact of a curriculum intervention using an assessment rubric for communication skill development of osteopathy students, 2022](#)

Despite using an explicit assessment rubric, insufficiently contextualised and integrated curriculum appears to disrupt student learning, whilst a spiralled, scaffolded curriculum delivered at an appropriate level in combination with explicit assessment rubrics work well together to support deeper learning and development.

[Professional diversity in leadership – Inclusion of the smaller professions., 2022](#)

There are 14 Allied Health Professions (AHPs) in England with approximately 170,000 AHPs working within the NHS. Physiotherapists represent the largest group of AHPs with approximately 61,000 registered with the Health and Care Professions Council, whilst Prosthetics and Orthotics represent the smallest profession with approximately 1000 registrants.

[Preparing osteopathy graduates for future careers: A review of osteopathic education in Australia, 2022](#)

Content analysis and expert panel discussions identified the curricula has a strong focus on critical thinking, communication

and problem solving and less focus on teamwork, leadership, initiative and enterprise and technological skills.

[Discrimination, bullying or harassment in undergraduate education in the osteopathic, chiropractic and physiotherapy professions: A systematic review with critical interpretive synthesis](#), 2022

We highlighted that bullying is prevalent within undergraduate MT education. This is reported to have a large impact upon learners' wellbeing and attainment. Attainment gaps and higher attrition rates for students from ethnic minority groups and students with disabilities in UK physiotherapy were noted in our review, this may not be applicable to other contexts.

[Mentors' experiences in an osteopathic medical student research program](#), 2021

Mentors were motivated to participate in the voluntary research program for both altruistic and professional reasons. Since most mentors reported being satisfied with the program, it is likely they would participate in future mentored research programs. Our results suggest that mentors viewed this voluntary research program as mutually beneficial.

[A qualitative study exploring experiences and challenges of combining clinical academic training with family life](#), 2021

Although people manage to find ways to successfully combine clinical academic roles with family life, findings highlight a need to identify ways of supporting and encouraging trainees with caring responsibilities to ensure that they remain on the clinical academic pathway.

[Who Coaches the Coaches? The Development of a Coaching Model for Experiential Learning](#), 2021

We recommend practices for coaching that can support gains for students and faculty in experiential, project-based, interdisciplinary courses.

[Capitalising on the transformational opportunities of early clinical academic career training for nurses, midwives and allied health professionals](#), 2020 *Abstract only**

Stakeholders need to recognise that a cultural shift about the purposes of research training from a transactional to transformative approaches is required to facilitate the development of NMAHPS clinical academics, to enable them to contribute to innovative health and patient care.

[Evaluating a specialist education programme for nurses and allied health professionals working in older people care: A qualitative analysis of motivations and impact](#), 2020 *Abstract only**

Understanding the motivations to undertake a specialist gerontological programme and the impacts on practitioners and older people care and services will help inform the continuing professional development agenda for nurses and allied health professionals working in this field of practice.

[Understanding the professional identity development of undergraduate osteopathic students in the UK](#), 2020

Undergraduate osteopathic students in the UK have a conception of the professional identity of osteopaths based on three levels, with which they strongly or weakly associated. These findings provide the first theory of how student osteopaths construct their professional identity.

[A pilot Study to develop a tool for the assessment of osteopathic student's clinical reasoning](#), 2019

At a time when osteopathy is moving towards evidence-based practice, it is becoming necessary to implement teaching

methods and practices that are themselves evidence-based. There are studies on clinical reasoning in osteopathic education, and broadly in medical education, but to date none have really led to an assessment tool for clinical practice.

[Building clinical academic leadership capacity: sustainability through partnership](#), 2018 *Abstract only**

A national clinical academic training programme has been developed in England for nurses, midwives and allied health professionals but is insufficient to build a critical mass to have a significant impact on improved patient care.

Community, primary, secondary and tertiary care

[Osteopathic practice in the United Kingdom: A retrospective analysis of practice data](#), 2022

To better understand the role of osteopathy in UK health service delivery, the profession needs to do more research with patients in order to understand their needs and their expected outcomes of care, and for this to inform osteopathic practice and education.

[Effectiveness of an osteopathic treatment on the autonomic nervous system: a systematic review of the literature](#), 2019

The included published studies represent a good level of evidence. Due to a small number of subjects and no follow-ups, the methodological quality is rated as moderate.

[Complementary medicine and the NHS: Experiences of integration with UK primary care](#), 2018

Various models for integrating CAM with UK primary care were identified. Social prescribing and NHS/patient co-funded CAM may be potentially sustainable models for future integration. Lack of funding and negative perceptions of CAM remain the primary challenge to integration.

Role progression and development

[Professional identity in osteopathy: A scoping review of peer-reviewed primary osteopathic research](#), 2022

This review aimed to examine primary osteopathic research to advance understanding of OPI. Thematic analysis resulted in five domains, each illustrating osteopathic traits and debates, cohesion and conflict at individual and collective level.

[When worlds collide: Experiences of physiotherapists, chiropractors, and osteopaths working together](#), 2022

The findings from this study suggest that physiotherapists, chiropractors and osteopaths that work together in the same clinic may collaborate while simultaneously navigating blurred professional lines. These results suggest that working together in the same clinic is a meaningful form of contact, which in turn allows for collaborative practices that may reduce intergroup tension between professions.

[Digital health technologies for osteopaths and allied healthcare service providers: A scoping review](#), 2021

The results of this review indicate that telehealth technology effectively monitors and progresses patient care, while mobile health applications provide remote support and enable data collection.

[A phenomenological investigation into the influences on the development of professional identity in novice osteopaths](#), 2020 *Abstract only**

In this study, extrinsic influences emerged as the dominant influences. The participants in the study put great emphasis on the effect that extrinsic influences like education, experiences with other practitioners and mentorship had on professional identity construction.

[Relationship between labour force satisfaction, wages and retention within the UK National Health Service: a systematic review of the literature](#), 2020

Pay was found to influence satisfaction, which in turn affected retention. An increase in wages alone is unlikely to be sufficient to ameliorate the concerns of NHS workers.

[Developing a consolidated research framework for clinical allied health professionals practising in the UK](#), 2020

The consolidated framework was entitled 'Shaping Better Practice Through Research: A Practitioner Framework' by stakeholders, thus emphasising its ambition to embed research activity into practice.

[Engaging with evidence-based practice in the osteopathy clinical learning environment: A mixed methods pilot study](#), 2019

This pilot study suggests learners and clinical educators engage with evidence in the CLE, including co-learning. PICO, within the SNAPPS-Plus model, may be an appropriate vehicle for promoting learner use of EBM.

[Attitudes, skills and use of evidence-based practice among UK osteopaths: a national cross-sectional survey](#), 2018

UK osteopaths were generally supportive of evidence-based practice, had moderate-level skills in EBP and engaged in EBP activities infrequently. The development of effective interventions that improve osteopaths' skills and the incorporation of EBP into clinical practice should be the focus of future research.

Workforce perspectives and mental health

[Mental health outcomes among osteopathic physicians during COVID-19](#), 2022

Our survey study demonstrated that osteopathic physicians graduated from a single academic institution experienced symptoms of anxiety, burnout, and depression during the COVID-19 pandemic based on the validated questionnaires.

[An exploration of the clinical reasoning used by registered osteopaths in their choice of therapeutic approach](#), 2022

Four main themes emerged from the qualitative phase: (1) Patient/person Centred Care, (2) Practitioner Wellbeing, (3) Experiential Learning and (4) Integrating Evidence.

[Joining the workforce during the COVID-19 pandemic: views of Allied Health Profession students](#), 2022 *Abstract only**

Although the transition from student to practitioner continues to be a stressful period, only a minority of participants reported COVID-19 as an explicit stressor.

[Wellbeing and coping of UK nurses, midwives and allied health professionals during COVID-19-a cross-sectional study](#), 2022

*Abstract only**

This workforce would benefit from additional support/services to prevent further deterioration in mental health and wellbeing and optimise workforce retention.

[A blame game and sticky labels: A qualitative study of osteopaths' experiences of managing patients with pain catastrophising](#), 2021 *Abstract only**

Osteopaths found the construct of catastrophising clinically useful as they felt it possessed properties distinct from other negative psychosocial factors. Also, they felt relatively comfortable at managing the state in patients.

[Burnout, Perceived Stress, Sleep Quality, and Smartphone Use: A Survey of Osteopathic Medical Students](#), 2020

Burnout is a widespread problem in numerous professions but is particularly high among medical students, residents, and early-career physicians compared with college graduates of similar age. However, minimal research has addressed burnout in osteopathic medical students.

[Alternative medicines worth researching? Citation analyses of acupuncture, chiropractic, homeopathy, and osteopathy 1996–2017](#), 2020 *Abstract only**

Whilst the research tends to be cited at a below average rate in most broad fields (n = 27) and years (1996–2017), acupuncture, chiropractic, and homeopathy are exceptions in some broad fields, including some core areas. Thus, studying these alternative medicines may not always lead to research that tends to be ignored in academia, even if many scientists disparage it.

[Complementing or conflicting? A qualitative study of osteopaths' perceptions of NICE low back pain and sciatica guidelines in the UK](#), 2019 *Abstract only**

Osteopaths' views of NICE low back pain and sciatica guidelines are varied. Some of these views of LBP guidelines may act as obstacles to their implementation.

Diversity and inclusion

[“Raising the curtain on the equality theatre”: a study of recruitment to first healthcare job post-qualification in the UK National Health Service](#), 2022

The Healthcare Workforce Equity + Diversity Lens we have developed can help to ‘raise the curtain on the equality theatre’ and inform more inclusive approaches to recruitment such as

contextualised recruitment or effective allyship between employers and universities.

[The challenge of diversity in the allied health professionals](#), 2020 *Abstract only**

Although the Allied Health Professions (AHPs) are a diverse range of professions in terms of their skill set. The workforce which makes up the professions lacks diversity.

[Osteopathic ableism: A critical disability view of traditional osteopathic theory in modern practice](#), 2021

Osteopathy is a health profession regulated by statute in the UK and osteopaths regularly encounter patients from a wide range of backgrounds including people with disabilities. Disabled people are underrepresented in UK osteopathy, both as patients and practitioners. We explore some of the traditional discourses of osteopathic practice and discuss the potential harms of applying these concepts to practice.

[Empathy as related to gender, age, race and ethnicity, academic background and career interest: A nationwide study of osteopathic medical students in the United States](#), 2020 *Abstract only**

Special features of this study (eg, nationwide representative samples, use of a validated instrument for measuring empathy in patient care, statistical control for the effect of ‘good impression’ response bias, and consistency of findings in different samples from multiple institutions) provide more definitive answers to the issue of correlates of empathy in medical students and increase our confidence in the validity, reliability and generalisability of the results.

Competency Frameworks

[General Osteopathic Council Standards](#)

The Osteopathic Practice Standards set out the standards of conduct, ethics and competence required of osteopaths to ensure high-quality care for patients.

[Development of a digital competency framework for UK Allied Health Professionals](#), 2020

This framework has been developed to support the enhancement of digital competence (knowledge and skills associated with digital technology in practice) for all allied health professions from band 3 to band 9. It is intended to be a developmental and supportive tool that can enable all staff to meet their digital potential.

[Developing a national musculoskeletal core capabilities framework for first point of contact practitioners](#), 2019

The framework outlines the core capabilities required for practitioners working as the first point of contact for people with musculoskeletal conditions. It provides a standard structure and language across professions, with greater consistency and portability of musculoskeletal core capabilities. Agreement on each of the 105 outcomes was universally high amongst the expert panel, and the framework is now being disseminated by Health Education England, NHS England and Skills for Health.

[Musculoskeletal core capabilities framework for first point of contact practitioners](#), 2018

This framework was commissioned by Health Education England and NHS England, building upon work previously undertaken by the national programme delivered by the Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Alliance (ARMA) and its member organisations

*Help accessing articles or papers

Where a report/ journal article or resource is freely available the link has been provided. If an NHS OpenAthens account is required this has been indicated. It has also been highlighted if only the abstract is available. If you do not have an OpenAthens account you can self-register here.

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