

Scope of Practice – Osteopath

Osteopaths are primary healthcare practitioners. Central to the competent practice of osteopathy is an understanding of the role of the primary care team and referral routes within the primary care team and to hospital based services.

Osteopathy is a person-centred form of manual medicine informed by osteopathic principles. Osteopathic medicine is not confined to historical osteopathic knowledge; rather osteopathic philosophies and concepts inform the interpretation and application of interdisciplinary knowledge and the basic medical sciences. Osteopathic medicine is an evolving field of knowledge and incorporates new concepts as our understanding of health and disease progresses.

Osteopaths treat people and conceptualise health and disease within a broad holistic bio-psycho-social and environmental context. Osteopaths have a particular interest in conditions of the neuro-musculoskeletal system and the management of pain. Osteopaths seek to prevent disease and promote health by empowering patients through sharing knowledge on lifestyle choices that improve health outcomes.

Osteopathic practice may be situated within a continuum of healthcare and wellness, with osteopaths applying evidence-based approaches to the management of named pathologies and conditions through to promoting wellbeing through supportive treatment.

The competent practice of osteopathy clearly requires broad diagnostic competencies and a differential diagnosis is required to determine if a structural diagnosis and the use of osteopathic manual treatment (OMT) is appropriate. Although osteopathic practice is often defined by OMT, the practice of osteopathy is not limited to a structural diagnosis and OMT. Whilst there may well be a somatic component to disease, OMT may not be a suitable or principal modality in every presentation.

Osteopaths work across the lifespan and may treat individuals from birth to old age, or deliver services in group settings. Professional knowledge may be applied in a range of settings not limited to clinical practice, such as health promotion, education and research, health policy and healthcare management.

Pursuant to section 12 of the Act, the Council has prescribed the following qualifications for registration in the Scope of Practice – Osteopath:

All applicants must:

(1) hold a Master of Osteopathy awarded by Unitec New Zealand;

or

(2) hold a Bachelor of Musculoskeletal Health and Post graduate Diploma in Osteopathy from the Ara Institute of Canterbury;

or

(3) hold a Master of Osteopathy awarded by Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology or Victoria University, Melbourne or Southern Cross University, NSW, provided those qualifications remain accredited by the New Zealand Osteopathic Council;

or

(4) pass the overseas assessment process endorsed by the Council;

or

(5) be registered under the Competent Authority Pathway endorsed by the Council, which means that an applicant is registered with the General Osteopathic Council of the United Kingdom and holds a qualification from one of the following institutions:

- British College of Osteopathic Medicine (as validated by the University of Westminster since 9 May 2000);
- British School of Osteopathy (as validated by the University of Luton since 9 May 2000);
- College of Osteopaths (as validated by Keele University since 1 September 2007);
- College of Osteopaths (as validated by Middlesex University since 1 October 2001);
- European School of Osteopathy (as validated by the University of Greenwich since 9 May 2000);
- Leeds Metropolitan University (since 1 September 2007);
- London College of Osteopathic Medicine (since 1 October 2001);
- London School of Osteopathy (as validated by the University of Brighton or Anglia Ruskin University since 9 May 2000);
- Oxford Brookes University (since 1 October 2003);
- Surrey Institute of Osteopathic Medicine (as validated by the University of Surrey since 1 January 2003).