

National Osteopathy Report 2006

Findings of a survey conducted for the General Osteopathic Council

Objective

The survey was designed to investigate awareness and opinion amongst GB adults relating to osteopathic treatment and osteopaths.

Methodology

The research was conducted independently by The Survey Shop

The sample was drawn at random from the UK electoral roll. Quotas were set for age and gender. Respondents were qualified to ensure they had heard of the term osteopathy.

1003 interviews were conducted anonymously by telephone over the period 22nd to 29th August 2006.

The estimated statistical sampling error for the whole sample is up to +/- 3%.

Headline findings

- 38% of people who had heard of the term osteopathy stated that they had first heard the term used by a friend, relative or colleague.
- 22% of people who had heard of the term osteopathy stated that they had visited an osteopath.
- 80% of people who had heard of the term osteopathy but had not visited one stated that the reason they had never done so was because they believed they had had no need
- 52% of all those who had visited an osteopath had made their own decision to seek help
- 80% of people who had visited an osteopath were either satisfied or very satisfied with osteopathic treatment.
- 16% of those who had visited an osteopath stated that they had a concern or concerns, or had had a concern or concerns
- 47% of those who had been concerned were concerned because there had been no, or may not have been any, relief or improvement
- 50% of those who had visited an osteopath stated that they would be very likely to recommend osteopathy to a friend
- Back pain (90%) and neck pain (74%) were the problems most commonly associated with osteopathic treatment
- Manipulation (80%) and massage (72%) were the treatments most commonly associated with osteopaths
- Asking a GP or other doctor was the most likely (66%) method to be used to find an osteopath
- 20% stated (when prompted) that they would use the General Osteopathic Council's 'Find an Osteopath' online register
- 76% of people who had heard of the term osteopathy believed that osteopaths worked mainly in the private sector
- The estimated average of the amounts considered to be a reasonable fee for a private 30 or 40 minute treatment was £36
- 88% of those who had heard of the term osteopathy believed that osteopathic treatment should be provided within the NHS
- 20% of those who had heard of the term osteopathy stated that they had some form of private medical insurance.
- 47% of those with medical insurance believed that it included cover for osteopathic treatment
- 53% of people who had heard of the term osteopathy stated that they were aware that it was a criminal offence to claim to be an osteopath without being registered with the GOsC
- 38% of people who had heard of the term osteopathy believed that the level of training required of an osteopath was to have been trained and examined under the administration of the GOsC. The same proportion of 38% believed that an osteopath should have completed a degree level course in osteopathy

Summary

Initial awareness [Qs. 1, 2 & 3]

81% of respondents who had heard of the term osteopathy stated that they were able to recall how they had first heard of osteopathy.

38% of the sample said that they had heard by word of mouth from a friend, relative or colleague. Other sources were; a doctor (8%), television (7%), a newspaper (7%), a magazine (7%), and a healthcare professional other than a doctor (3%).

Those who had visited an osteopath were more likely than those who hadn't to have first heard from a friend, relative or colleague (50% v. 34%), or to have heard from their GP or doctor (14% v. 7%).

Almost one-third (30%) of those who had heard of osteopathy stated that they had first done so between one and five years ago.

Use of osteopaths [Q.4]

22% of people who had heard of the term osteopathy stated that they had visited an osteopath. Only 6% of those aged under 30 had visited an osteopath, at the age of 30 and above the likelihood of having seen an osteopath increased from 21% for those aged between 30 and 44, to 29% amongst those aged 60 or over. Men (21%) and women (22%) were almost equally likely to have seen an osteopath, and there was very little variation between people in different socio-economic groups. People in Scotland (13%) and the east Midlands / Anglia region (17%) were the least likely to have used an osteopath.

Reasons for not visiting an osteopath [Q.5]

The majority (80%) of people who had heard of the term osteopath but had not visited one stated that the reason they had never done so was because they believed they had had no need.

The other most frequent reasons were; seeing a chiropractor instead (4%), not knowing what they do (4%), seeing a physiotherapist instead (2%), seeing a doctor instead (2%), not being able to afford it (1%), and that their GP had a negative attitude (1%).

Mode of referral [Q.6]

Over half (52%) of all those who had visited an osteopath had made their own decision to seek help from an osteopath. Just over a quarter (26%) said that a friend, relative or colleague had made the suggestion. One-fifth had been referred by a GP or other doctor, and 2% had been referred by a healthcare professional other than a GP or doctor (these comprised; another osteopath, an ante-natal lecturer, a sports physiotherapist and a yoga teacher).

Women (59%) were somewhat more likely than men (43%) to have made their own referral. Men (32%) were somewhat more likely than women (21%) to have taken the advice of friend, relative or colleague to make the visit.

Satisfaction with treatment [Q.7]

80% of people who had visited an osteopath were either satisfied or very satisfied with their treatment. One in ten was dissatisfied and a similar proportion had mixed feelings or another point of view.

Men (81%) and women (80%) were equally likely to have felt satisfied with their osteopath's treatment.

Those in the 30 – 44 age group (62% satisfied) were somewhat more likely to feel satisfied than those aged between 45 – 59 (43% satisfied) or aged over 60 (48% satisfied).

Concerns over visiting an osteopath [Q.8]

Just under one in six (16%) of those who had visited an osteopath stated that they had a concern or concerns, or had had a concern or concerns while seeing their osteopath.

The likelihood of having, or having had, a concern or concerns was almost the same for all age groups and for both genders.

Nature of concern [Q.9]

Amongst those who had expressed concern about seeing their osteopath, almost half (47%) had been concerned because there had been no, or may not have been any, improvement in their symptoms or condition. Although numbers of individuals in each group were low this concern appeared to be correlated with age – with two of eight 30 to 44 year olds (25%) being concerned about a lack of improvement, five amongst eleven (45%) of those aged 45 to 59, and nine amongst thirteen (69%) of those in the group aged 60 or over.

26% of those who had been concerned said that their concern lay with the competence of the practitioner. (This equates to 4% of all those who had visited an osteopath.)

24% were concerned about the cost, and the same proportion stated that they had had 'a previous bad experience'. 9% mentioned the negative attitude of their GP. None expressed a concern about having to undress.

Other, unprompted concerns included; '*concerned it would do more harm than good*', '*other people's experiences*', '*read about fatality cases*', '*violent nature of treatment*' and '*you don't have an x-ray*'.

Likelihood of recommendation [Q.10]

Half of those who had visited an osteopath stated that they would recommend osteopathy to a friend. A further 30% stated that would be quite likely to do so. 19% were either unlikely, or not at all likely, to recommend osteopathy.

Over half (58%) of people aged 30-44 who had used an osteopath said that they would recommend osteopathy. Men (53%) and women (48%) were very likely to recommend or already had recommended osteopathy.

Problems suitable for osteopathic treatment [Q.11]

A large majority (90%) of people who had heard of the term osteopathy stated that they thought osteopaths treated back pain. A majority also thought that neck pain (74%), hip or joint pain (66%), sports' injuries (63%), arm or leg pain (58%) and postural problems (52%) were problems that an osteopath would treat.

A minority believed that whiplash (46%), work strain such as repetitive strain injury or RSI (41%), osteoporosis (34%), headaches (28%) and colic in babies (8%) were conditions suitable for treatment by an osteopath.

Men were somewhat less likely than women to think that osteopaths treated problems such as neck pain (70% v. 77%) or arm / leg pain (52% v. 62%).

Osteopathic treatments [Q.12]

Four out of five people who had heard of the term osteopathy, believed that osteopaths used manipulation as a technique. This was followed by massage (72%), exercise programmes (62%), mobilisation (45%), dietary advice (37%), ultrasound and X-rays (32%), prescribed medication or steroid injections (20%), blood tests (20%) and surgery (9%).

Those aged under 45 were somewhat more likely to believe that osteopathic treatments involved some of the techniques associated with conventional medicine than those aged 45 and older; for example prescribing medication and steroids was seen as osteopathic treatment by almost a quarter (24%) of those aged under 45 compared to 16% of those aged 45 and older.

Finding an osteopath [Q.13]

Two-thirds of people who had heard of the term osteopathy would be likely to use their GP or doctor to help find an osteopath; this proportion was consistent across all age groups and for both genders.

Just under half (48%) would use a local directory such as *Yellow Pages* and almost the same proportion (47%) would ask a friend, relative or colleague. 30% would use an online search engine such as *Google*. Amongst 16 – 29 year olds this proportion was 44%, and amongst those aged 60 and over the proportion was 10%.

One in five said they would be likely to use the General Osteopathic Council website's online Register 'Find an Osteopath'.

Men were somewhat less likely than women to ask a friend, relative or colleague (43% v. 50%), or to use the GOSc's online register (16% v. 24%).

Funding Status [Q.14]

Just over three-quarters (76%) of people who had heard of the term osteopathy believed that osteopaths worked mainly in the private sector. One in twelve (8%) believed they worked mainly in the NHS and 16% didn't know or didn't express an opinion.

One in ten of those who had not visited an osteopath believed that their work was mostly conducted within the NHS and 86% of those who had visited an osteopath believed that they worked mainly in the private sector.

Fees [Q.15]

The estimated average of the amounts considered to be a reasonable fee for a private 30 or 40 minute treatment was £36. This average was consistent between socio-economic groups. A majority of 52% had stated that the fee should be in a price band between £26 and £50. One-in five stated that the fee should be between £15 and £25, and 13% believed the fee should be higher.

Those aged under 30 believed, on average, that a reasonable fee was £42. Those who had stated that they had visited an osteopath, on average, believed that a reasonable fee was £32, those who had not seen an osteopath believed a reasonable fee would be £38.

Osteopathic NHS treatment [Q.16]

88% believed that the NHS should be providing osteopathic treatment, or that it was already doing so. 3% believed that it should not and 9% didn't know.

Medical Insurance [Q.17]

One in five people who had heard of the term osteopathy stated that they had some form of private medical insurance. Those aged 30 to 59 (27%) were most likely to have medical insurance.

Those who had stated that they had visited an osteopath were somewhat more likely to have medical insurance than those who hadn't (27% v. 19%).

Insurance including osteopathic treatment [Q.18]

47% of those with medical insurance believed that it included osteopathic treatment. 43% didn't know whether it was included or not, and 9% stated that it was not included.

Amongst those who had visited an osteopath and had medical insurance 60% stated that their insurance covered such treatment and 22% said that it didn't.

Control of the title of osteopath [Q.19]

53% of people who had heard of the term osteopathy stated that they were aware that it was a criminal offence to claim to be an osteopath without being registered with the GOsC.

Training in osteopathy [Q.20]

38% of people who had heard of the term osteopathy believed that the level of training required of an osteopath is to have been trained and examined under the administration of the GOsC. The same proportion believed that an osteopath should have completed a degree level course in osteopathy.

Amongst those who had visited an osteopath, 46% believed that the training required should be administered by the GOsC and 34% believed that degree level course was required.