



Policy Advisory Committee
9 March 2017
Fitness to practise data analysis

Classification	Public
Purpose	For discussion
Issue	The paper presents details of recent analysis of data about individuals involved in fitness to practise proceedings and considers preliminary findings
Recommendation	To consider the content of the point
Financial and resourcing implications	None at present
Equality and diversity implications	The report highlights some weaknesses in the collection of data in relation to protected characteristics of individuals involved in fitness to practise cases which needs to be considered in any future work.
Communications implications	None at present
Annex	Research report – understanding the characteristics of osteopaths involved in GOSc fitness to practise proceedings
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Background

1. Across the regulatory sector there is considerable interest in undertaking a more 'proactive' approach to regulation and focusing attention on the prevention of harm rather than the investigation of complaints, often after harm has occurred.
2. Since 2013, the GOsC has been collecting and aggregating data about complaints, indemnity insurance claims and concerns raised about practitioners by patients. This has been a unique partnership between insurers, the professional association and ourselves aimed at understanding common patient concerns that occur in osteopathic practice.
3. While we have a growing understanding of the types of concerns that arise in relation to osteopaths' practice, until now we have not undertaken any systematic analysis in relation to the osteopaths who are subject to complaints.
4. This research project was a preliminary attempt to gain a greater insight into the demographic characteristics of osteopaths who have allegations investigated by the GOsC's Investigating Committee and subsequently may have those allegations considered by the Professional Conduct Committee.

Discussion

5. The research was undertaken in the first part of 2016 and sought to:
 - a. Determine the demographic, professional and practice characteristics of osteopaths who were involved in the proceedings of the General Osteopathic Council Investigation Committee (IC) between 1 April 2011 and 30 March 2016.
 - b. Determine the demographic, professional and practice characteristics of osteopaths who appeared before the General Osteopathic Council Professional Conduct Committee (PCC) between 1 April 2011 and 30 March 2016 and had a decision of Removal, Suspension, Admonishment or Conditions of Practice made against them.
 - c. Compare the demographic, professional and practice characteristics of osteopaths who were involved in proceedings of the GOsC IC and appeared before the PCC between 1 April 2011 and 30 March 2016 and had a decision of Removal, Suspension, Admonishment or Conditions of Practice made against them with the wider practising osteopathic population as at 30 March 2016.
6. The findings of the research are set out in detail in the report at the Annex.
7. Before considering the findings, it is important to make a number of preliminary observations:

- a. The number of complaints made about osteopaths and number of findings against them is very small (in this study 131 complaints and 32 sanctions) and therefore any conclusions drawn may not be statistically reliable.
 - b. The study is preliminary in its nature. It was as important to understanding the quality of the data that we hold and how this could be improved as it was to draw conclusions from the data itself.
 - c. The report does not make policy recommendations (other than in relation to future data collection) and further thought is required about what actions (if any) could or should be taken as a result of the findings.
8. Notwithstanding the caveat at 7a above, some key observations from the data analysis are as follows:
- a. There is a significant over-representation of male osteopaths at both the investigation stage and in PCC findings (Figures 2 and 4, Table 2).
 - b. The majority of those investigated or subject to sanction are mid-career or mid-late career registrants (Figures 6 and 7, Tables 3 and 4)).
 - c. There is a slight over-representation of more mature graduates among those investigated or subject to sanction (Figures, 18-20, Table 7).
 - d. Geographical location, place of education and nationality do not appear to be significant factors in relation to fitness to practise activity (although the data is limited).
9. The report has also highlighted some areas where it would be helpful to improve our data collection. In particular, the report recommends that more information is collected from osteopaths at the initial investigation stage to understand more about individual osteopaths and the context in which they practice.
10. The data analysis has been conducted in such a way as to allow for future prospective data collection and analysis.
11. The Committee is asked to consider the report and its findings and to provide any feedback on this initial study and any possible future work in this area.

Recommendation: to consider the content of this paper.