



GENERAL OSTEOPATHIC COUNCIL

**Response to House of Lords Select Committee on EU Sub-Committee G
(Social Policy & Consumer Affairs) Inquiry into the European
Commission's proposed directive on the application of
patients' rights in cross-border healthcare**

Key concerns for the General Osteopathic Council (GOsC)

The GOsC welcomes a clear framework for cross-border healthcare which this proposal seeks to achieve, but this should not be at the expense of patient and public safety. In any future directive we will be calling for:

1. Support for the development and implementation of regulatory mechanisms across Europe to ensure a high standard of osteopathic care for patients, and
2. A Europe-wide approach to communication and information sharing (such as registration and fitness to practise data on healthcare professionals) between competent authorities.

Background to the General Osteopathic Council

The General Osteopathic Council (GOsC) has a statutory duty to regulate the practice of osteopathic care in the UK. Osteopaths must be registered with the GOsC in order to practise in the UK.

We work with the public and profession to protect and promote patient safety through effective regulation of osteopaths in the UK, by:

- registering qualified professionals
- setting standards of osteopathic practice and conduct
- assuring the quality of osteopathic education
- ensuring Continuing Professional Development
- helping patients with concerns or complaints about an osteopath

Website: <http://www.osteopathy.org.uk>

1. Balancing free movement with the maintenance of public and patient safety

- As both patients and healthcare professionals move increasingly within the EU, there is a need for greater patient protection through proper regulation and high standards of treatment. Whilst this draft directive seeks to ensure that the necessary requirements for high-quality, safe and efficient healthcare are ensured for cross-border care, we are concerned about its practical implementation. This is because of the diverse approach to access and quality of healthcare in and between Member States.
 - Currently, osteopathy is regulated in only four EU Member States – Finland, France, Malta and the United Kingdom; and between these countries the systems of regulation differ. With the aim of promoting regulation in Europe, the GOsC initiated the Forum for Osteopathic Regulation in Europe (FORE)¹ to help enhance patient protection and confidence in osteopathic professionals. FORE brings together national registers and competent authorities across Europe to develop a consensus on benchmarks for standards of osteopathic education, training and practice. We hope, therefore, that with this proposal the European Commission will encourage Member State Governments to develop regulatory mechanisms for osteopathy where these do not currently exist.
- Ø In any future directive, the GOsC will be calling for support for the development and implementation of regulatory mechanisms across Europe to ensure a high standard of osteopathic care for patients.**

2. Consistency of information sharing between healthcare regulators

- The draft directive also sets out a duty of cooperation between Member States on cross-border healthcare. We would, however, go further to call for a more robust Europe-wide approach to communication and information sharing (such as registration and fitness to practise data on healthcare professionals) between competent authorities. This is not just so that the regulator is in a position to determine an osteopath's fitness to practise, but also to enable the patient to know what they can expect from an osteopath, and to be assured a means of redress, should this be required.
 - In this regard, we would welcome the formalisation of the agreements of the 'Healthcare Professionals Crossing Borders'² initiative which provide a framework to enhance cooperation between healthcare regulators in Europe.
- Ø In any future directive the GOsC will be calling for a Europe-wide approach to communication and information sharing between competent authorities.**

¹ www.forewards.eu

² Healthcare Professionals Crossing Borders (HPCB) is an informal partnership of professional healthcare regulators from within Europe that works collaboratively on a range of regulatory issues. The purpose is to contribute to patient safety in Europe through effective regulatory collaboration in the context of cross-border healthcare and free movement of healthcare professionals.