

Note: This advice is given by the CAP Executive about non-broadcast advertising. It does not constitute legal advice. It does not bind CAP, CAP advisory panels or the Advertising Standards Authority.

Osteopathy is a healthcare profession that utilises a patient focused, physical approach to restoring, maintaining and promoting physical and psychosocial well being. Primarily treatments take the form of a manual therapy involving massage, mobilisation and spinal manipulation for the treatment of musculo-skeletal problems. Osteopaths have been regulated by statute since 1993 and may refer to serious medical conditions if they hold convincing evidence of the efficacy of their treatments (Rules 12.1 and 12.2).

Neither CAP nor the ASA has assessed to which, if any, serious medical conditions osteopaths may refer but CAP accepts that osteopaths may claim to help the following medical conditions:

(NB: following a review by CAP of the Bronfort et al Review, (2010) this has been updated and the additions are marked with an asterisk):

- generalised aches and pains,
- joint pains including hip and knee pain from osteoarthritis as an adjunct to core OA treatments and exercise\*
- arthritic pain,
- general, acute & chronic backache, back pain (not arising from injury or accident)\*
- uncomplicated mechanical neck pain (as opposed to neck pain following injury i.e. whiplash)\*
- headache arising from the neck (cervicogenic)\*
- frozen shoulder/ shoulder and elbow pain/ tennis elbow (lateral epicondylitis) arising from associated musculoskeletal conditions of the back and neck, but not isolated occurrences\*
- circulatory problems,
- cramp,
- digestion problems,
- joint pains, lumbago,
- sciatica,
- muscle spasms,
- neuralgia,
- fibromyalgia,
- inability to relax,
- rheumatic pain,
- minor sports injuries and tensions .

(see General List on the Help Note on Health, Beauty and Slimming Marketing that Refers to Medical Conditions). Marketers should be aware, however, that neither the ASA nor CAP have reviewed a great deal of evidence on the efficacy of osteopathy and an objection to the ASA could change the position if the ASA were satisfied with the submitted evidence.

So far, the ASA has received only one or two complaints about ads by osteopaths. One related to whether a practitioner was legally entitled to call himself an osteopath (Mr J Stewart Kyle, 25 September 2002). Osteopaths should not mislead on their status or training.