



Quick review 24.3.2020

## **Can osteopaths contribute to the care and management of those with COVID-19 virus?**

This is a new virus and knowledge about it is accruing daily. What is known is that it is highly infectious and contagious, therefore any health care professional has to consider the potential benefit and harm from any intervention given to patients.

### **Evidence summary**

There is no current research evidence to indicate that osteopathic manual therapy care can specifically help in the direct treatment of COVID-19 or other types of corona virus illness.

There is research evidence to indicate that manual therapy care may potentially be of benefit as an adjunct form of care and management of some of the symptoms directly or indirectly associated with having pneumonia.

There is some inconclusive but favourable evidence to show that manual care may help in the management of pneumonia but it is not recommended in routine practice (Yang M et al 2013, Clar et al 2014, Noll et al 2010). This research was not based on COVID-19 and SARS cov-2. The evidence from hospital settings showed some weak limited positive outcomes for reducing length of stay and antibiotic use (bacterial pneumonia).

There are also some primary research studies (laboratory based research) around lymphatic pump techniques showing positive immune response changes (Hodge et al 2012), but limited evidence available to show any benefit in a clinical practice setting with patients treated with osteopathic techniques.

The role that osteopathy may have played in the Spanish flu epidemic in the USA is controversial and cannot be generalised with confidence to the current COVID-19 situation. In the USA, osteopathic physicians are medically trained with prescribing rights and there is considerable uncertainty with regard to accuracy of the data due to the collection methods at that time (Mueller2013).

### **The role of the osteopath as a health care professional in the community**

One of the roles the osteopath can take in this pandemic is, as a health care professional in the wider allied health care community to help disseminate Public Health advice and guidance about:

- Infection control, personal hygiene and prevention
- Making healthy lifestyle choices, keeping fit, eating healthily and
- Information and support for mental well being
- Self-management

## **Risk**

There is a risk to patients and clinicians of both contracting and transmitting the virus during frontline care with patients seeking treatment (See WHO FAQs <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses> ). Transmission can be through respiratory droplets and or via contaminated surfaces. Appropriate infection control equipment and measures are essential to curb the spread of the virus (see guidance for healthcare settings from the GOsC and the UK government. ([https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/874316/Infection\\_prevention\\_and\\_control\\_guidance\\_for\\_pandemic\\_coronavirus.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/874316/Infection_prevention_and_control_guidance_for_pandemic_coronavirus.pdf) ).

## **Public health guidance:**

Keep abreast of advice from Department of Health and Social Care UK and Public Health England, Health Protection Scotland, Public Health Wales and Public Health Agency in N. Ireland about the virus.

COVID-19: guidance for health professionals. Information on COVID-19, including guidance on the assessment and management of suspected UK cases.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/wuhan-novel-coronavirus>

## **Other advice can be found at:**

As this situation is rapidly changing the most up-to-date guidance can be found on the Public Health England website: [www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance)

For information on guidance for healthcare professionals on COVID-19 infection in pregnancy see: <https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/guidelines-research-services/guidelines/coronavirus-pregnancy/>

Coronavirus (COVID-19): latest information and advice: [www.gov.uk/guidance/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-information-for-the-public](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-information-for-the-public)

For further information on coronavirus see: [www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus](http://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus)

Here at NCOR we will continue to find articles that might be relevant to osteopaths about clinical research relevant to the adjunct care osteopaths might give to patients after exposure to the COVID 19 virus, to build a knowledge bank.

## **Other research resources about COVID-19 can be found at:**

BMJ.com.

[https://www.bmj.com/coronavirus?int\\_source=wisepops&int\\_medium=wisepops&int\\_campaign=DAA\\_CoronaVirus\\_Jan24](https://www.bmj.com/coronavirus?int_source=wisepops&int_medium=wisepops&int_campaign=DAA_CoronaVirus_Jan24)

TheLancet.com

[https://www.thelancet.com/coronavirus?dgcid=kr\\_pop-up\\_tlcoronavirus20](https://www.thelancet.com/coronavirus?dgcid=kr_pop-up_tlcoronavirus20)

## **References**

Clar et al. **Clinical effectiveness of manual therapy for the management of musculoskeletal and non-musculoskeletal conditions: a systematic review and update of UK evidence report.** *Chiro & Man Therapies* 2014, 22: 12

Hodge L. **Osteopathic lymphatic pump techniques to enhance immunity and treat pneumonia.** [IJOM. March 2012](#) Volume 15, Issue 1, Pages 13–21.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijosm.2011.11.004>

Noll et al. **Efficacy of osteopathic manipulation as an adjunctive treatment for hospitalized patients with pneumonia: a randomized controlled trial.** *Osteopathic Medicine and Primary Care* 2010, 4:2

Yang M et al. **Chest physiotherapy for pneumonia in adults.** *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews.* 2013

<https://www.cochranelibrary.com/cdsr/doi/10.1002/14651858.CD006338.pub3/full>

Mueller D. **The 2012-2013 Influenza Epidemic and the Role of Osteopathic Manipulative Medicine**

*The Journal of the American Osteopathic Association*, September 2013, Vol. 113, 703-707. doi: <https://doi.org/10.7556/jaoa.2013.036>

**COVID- 19 Guidance for infection prevention and control in healthcare settings**

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/874316/Infection\\_prevention\\_and\\_control\\_guidance\\_for\\_pandemic\\_coronavirus.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/874316/Infection_prevention_and_control_guidance_for_pandemic_coronavirus.pdf)

**GOsC Infection control**

<https://www.iosteopathy.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/interim-infection-control-guidance-for-publication-19-03-2020-1.pdf>