

# **An Overview of Osteopathic Manipulation Techniques**

The spectrum of osteopathic manipulation techniques focused on the principal that body structure and function are dependent on one another. When structure is altered via the musculoskeletal system, abnormalities occur in other body systems. This, in turn, can produce restriction of motion, tenderness, tissue changes and asymmetry.

Following are some of the manipulation procedures most commonly used by osteopathic physicians to diagnose and treat somatic dysfunction:

## **Hands - On Contact**

The value of the placing of hands on a patient is universally acknowledged by health professionals. This essential component of the doctor-patient relationship has a great deal to do with the patient's well being, whether he or she suffers from a cold or a terminal disease. When the DO examines a patient by auscultation of the chest or palpation of the abdomen or spine, the treatment already has begun.

## **Soft - Tissue Technique**

This procedure is commonly applied to the musculature surrounding the spine, and consists of a rhythmic stretching, deep pressure and traction. Its purpose is to move tissue fluids (edema) and to relax hypertonic muscles and myofascial (fibrous tissue) layers associated with somatic dysfunction.

## **Myofascial Release**

This procedure is designed to treat primarily the myofascial structures. In the use of direct myofascial release treatment (MRT) a restrictive barrier is engaged for the myofascial tissues; the tissue is loaded with a constant force until release occurs. In treating with indirect MRT the dysfunctional tissues are guided along a path of least resistance until free movement is achieved.

## **Cranial Osteopathy**

Inside the skull or cranium there is a covering over the brain, the dura, that continues down inside the spine to the tailbone or sacrum, protecting and supporting the central nervous system. This central nervous system controls the functioning of every organ, muscle and nerve in the body. Cranial Osteopathy is a systematic approach to patient diagnosis and treatment utilizing the body's inherent, third wave impulse, emanating from the central nervous system and the fluctuation of cerebrospinal fluid. This is called Cranial Rhythmic Impulse (CRI). This gentle, manual technique uses the CRI to treat the whole person, emphasizing the head and spinal regions.

## **Lymphatic Technique**

This manual procedure is designed to promote circulation of the lymphatic fluids and can be used to relieve upper and lower respiratory infections. One technique is pressure applied with the physician's hands to the prone patient's upper anterior chest wall. When the force applied to the chest reaches its maximum on expiration, the physician's hands are removed suddenly. This increases negative pressure of the chest to assist the body's respiratory mechanism to move lymphatic fluids.

## **Thrust Technique**

In this form of manipulation, the physician applies a high velocity/low amplitude force to restore specific joint motion. With such a technique, the joint regains its normal range of motion and resets neural reflexes. The procedure reduces and/or completely nullifies the physical signs of somatic dysfunction tissue changes, asymmetry, restriction of motion and tenderness.

## **Muscle Energy Technique**

In this manual technique the patient is directed to use his or her muscles from a precise position and in a specific direction against counter force applied by the physician. The purpose is to restore motion, decrease muscle/tissue changes and modify asymmetry of somatic dysfunction.

## **Counterstrain**

The counterstrain technique is a manual procedure in which the patient is moved passively away from the restricted motion barrier, towards the position of greatest comfort. At this point, passive, asymptomatic strain is induced. This technique is used for relief of somatic dysfunctions that are too acute or too delicate to treat with other procedures.

The American Academy of Osteopathy is ready to answer your questions about the profession and its special contributions to US health care. Please contact:

American Academy of Osteopathy  
3500 DePauw Boulevard, Suite 1080  
Indianapolis, Indiana 46268-1136  
(317) 879-1881

The above copyright © 1992 American Academy of Osteopathy, 3500 DePauw Boulevard, Suite 1080, Indianapolis, Indiana 46268–1136