

When it comes to OMT, do we practice what we preach?

How widespread is the practice of osteopathic manipulative treatment (OMT) among osteopathic physicians is a question that has been rarely explored or documented. In addressing this issue, the article, beginning on page 91, "Preliminary findings on the use of osteopathic manipulative treatment by osteopathic physicians," by Lincoln J. Fry, PhD, uncovers some interesting findings. For example, 73% of the 100 practicing DOs who were surveyed used OMT with less than 25% of their patients.

Yet, we must interpret Dr Fry's findings cautiously, as they are based on a very small physician sample. We need to know how often *all* 30,000-plus practicing DOs in the United States use OMT. More important, though, we must remember that OMT is not the sole criterion to assess and analyze the practice of osteopathic medicine.

After all, don't we espouse our care for the "total" patient, wellness, the need to "seek health, not disease," and the belief that the "body has the inherent ability to heal itself?" These osteopathic medical principles—along with the application of OMT—are what make us different from allopathic physicians.

I agree that we must flaunt OMT and wear our osteopathic principles and practices more visibly in our everyday medical practices. Our heritage and our roots have enabled us to grow into fully recognized healthcare providers. But we cannot forget what has made us *distinctive*.

As healthcare providers, we must remember the customers we serve. The informed American public continues to seek the services of osteopathic physicians, but the *uninformed* public seeks alternative providers from traditional medical healers and nonpharmaceutical interventions. Whose fault is it that the vast majority of the public doesn't know about the osteopathic medical profession and osteopathic physicians? Is it the fault of the American Osteopathic Association (AOA) for not staging a public relations campaign on television? Is it the fault of the Auxiliary to the AOA for not placing more print advertisements in national magazines? Is the American Osteopathic Healthcare Association (AOHA) at fault for not doubling the number of osteopathic hospitals? No! None of these groups is at fault.

Rather, it is *our* fault. Each and every DO must wear our osteopathic medical heritage on our sleeves every day. We must tell everyone our philosophy and practice our osteopathic principles. No one can say it or practice it better than we. Yes, we need our spouses, families, associations, and practice affiliates to help us tell our story. But direct marketing of our services yields the best results. Ask yourself, "Am I doing all that I can?" Ask not what your profession can do for you, but what you can do for your profession.

The use of OMT by DO generalists or specialists is but one measure of who we are as osteopathic physicians. Every DO who "seeks health, not disease" is equally important to the osteopathic medical profession. This health-promotion, disease-prevention approach fits the principles of managed care, which aim to keep patients healthy and out of hospitals and physicians' offices. Are there rewards for physicians to keep their patients healthy? Definitely, yes! Is OMT a part of that? Only if we make it so. No one is going to do it for us.

The public continues to pay for and seek care from chiropractors, massage therapists, physical therapists, and the like. Are we losing our heritage and our market share by not using and marketing OMT? Are we content with saying, "We've arrived," and we are the same as our allopathic counterparts? What are we going to do about this? Only we can make the difference.

I intend to influence as many future osteopathic physicians as I can to help them make a difference in their practice of osteopathic medicine. Many of them will train in allopathic medical institutions, but they can educate others outside our profession by practicing OMT at those sites and by demonstrating the difference a DO makes by practicing the philosophy and principles taught at their colleges of osteopathic medicine.

What's your commitment to the profession?♦

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