

Osteopathic Principles of Treatment

By Steve Paulus, DO, MS

*Note: I have organized these **Ten Major Principles of Osteopathic Treatment** to complement the **Ten Key Concepts of Osteopathic Philosophy**. Osteopathic Philosophy forms the foundation of what it means to be an Osteopath, and the Principles of Osteopathic Treatment are a more detailed expression of what we treat. This list of the “Ten Major” Principles of Osteopathic Treatment is not meant to be exclusive; other minor principles of treatment are possible, but are do not have the same enormity and pragmatic effects.*

Ten Major Principles of Osteopathic Treatment

1. **OSTEOPATHIC MANIPULATIVE TREATMENT:** Structural or functional disturbances of any system of the body are treated with the action of a patient-specific, dynamic Osteopathic Manipulative Treatment. Every patient is unique and each treatment is individualized matching a person’s moment-to-moment distinctive clinical necessity. Osteopathic Manipulative Treatment is not merely the application of a technique used as a modality. Osteopathic philosophy and the dynamic action of an Osteopathic Manipulative Treatment are interdependent and inseparable.
2. **PROCESS-ORIENTED TREATMENT—Diagnosis/Treatment/Re-evaluation:** Osteopathic Manipulative Treatment utilizes a dynamic therapeutic approach uniting diagnosis with treatment and re-evaluation. The treatment process evolves based upon the body’s response, or lack of response to a progression of custom-made treatment inquiries that advance the patient toward health and a fuller expression of holism. This process oriented treatment approach applies to both the material and nonmaterial fields and their inseparable interconnections.

3. **MOTION:** Restoration of motion informs Osteopathic Manipulative Treatment. Physical or material motion restrictions coexist with subtle or nonmaterial motion restrictions and are treated using a patient-specific, dynamic Osteopathic Manipulative Treatment.
4. **THE MUSCULOSKELETAL SYSTEM:** The musculoskeletal system (bones, muscles, and connective tissues) has a unique structure and function that impacts the overall health of the entire organism. When the musculoskeletal system fails to perform normally, the entire organism may suffer a localized or generalized disorder. Clinical problems may manifest directly or exclusively in the musculoskeletal system or via the effects of musculoskeletal dysfunctions on other systems such as nervous, immune, visceral, etc.
5. **THE NERVOUS SYSTEM:** Impairments of nerve structure and function are specifically addressed by alleviating obstructions, impingements, irritations, or overstimulation of nerves by the application of an anatomically specific Osteopathic Manipulative Treatment.
6. **ARTERIES AND VEINS:** Impediments of arterial blood flowing into tissues and obstructions of venous outflow are caused primarily by restrictions of the musculoskeletal system. Freedom of blood flow forms one of the foundations of Osteopathic Manipulative Treatment.
7. **LYMPHATIC VESSELS:** An Osteopathic Manipulative Treatment promotes freedom lymphatic fluid flow from the extracellular space to the lymphatics and from the lymphatic vessels into the venous system.

8. **EXTRACELLULAR FLUID:** An Osteopathic Manipulative Treatment promotes a free exchange of fluids into and out of the extracellular space and into and out of the vascular space. Any restrictions of fluid movement relating to the extracellular fluid causes passive congestion, which is often the earliest manifestation of disease.

9. **VISCERA:** Osteopathic Manipulative Treatment of the viscera involves addressing the organ parenchyma, as well as the neurologic, arterial, venous, lymphatic, myofascial elements that regulate the structure and function of the internal organs.

10. **DIAGNOSTIC AND THERAPEUTIC ACTIONS OF CONNECTED ONENESS:**
The presence or absence of an all-inclusive expression of holism is a diagnostic and therapeutic tool in the Osteopathic Manipulative Treatment process. The perceptual fields of holism can be sensed and include the biologic field of health, the many presentations of normal, the non-material fields of inherent motion, and the awareness of intercommunication in the patient's body. The goal of an Osteopathic Manipulative Treatment is to engage a natural therapeutic process in a patient and to restore any aspect of holism.

SFP 7/22