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FORUM FOR
OSTEOPATHIC REGULATION
IN EUROPE

EFSOP



EUROPEAN
FRAMEWORK FOR
**STANDARDS OF
OSTEOPATHIC
PRACTICE**

“Improving patient safety will bring benefits in driving up standards and quality throughout Europe.

It will also help to improve the confidence of patients in healthcare wherever they are across the Union.”

Markos Kyprianou
European Commissioner for Health

Forum for Osteopathic Regulation in Europe

The Forum for Osteopathic Regulation in Europe (FORE) brings together national Registers and Competent Authorities for osteopathy across Europe.

FORE’s mission is to protect European patients, promote confidence in osteopathic professionals and be at the forefront of healthcare regulation.

As different countries are currently at various stages of recognition / regulation, the work of FORE is fundamental if the osteopathic profession is to successfully face increasing challenges in Europe. One such challenge is increasing mobility of professionals and patients across Europe¹. FORE welcomes increased freedom of movement, but this should not be at the expense of patient safety and quality of care.

For this reason FORE is working to improve information exchange and develop a consensus on standards of osteopathic education, training and practice across Europe.

¹ Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 September 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications

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Each section describes an area of osteopathic practice and provides a list of key requirements in that area.



Introduction to EFSOP

The European Framework for Standards of Osteopathic Practice (EFSOP) sets out the standards an osteopath needs to be able to demonstrate in their osteopathic practise, in line with osteopathic principles. Each area of capability is described in its osteopathic context and then further considered under a number of outcome statements.

Osteopaths are primary contact healthcare practitioners. EFSOP recognises the need for osteopaths to view themselves as part of the wider healthcare community. This carries with it responsibilities that include the need for osteopaths to acknowledge their legal and moral obligations to their patients, in addition to a commitment to maintaining competence, continuing professional development and the adoption of a self-critical stance to their professional work.

Purpose

This European Framework for Standards of Osteopathic Practice is intended as a template to establish core competences required by an osteopath and to inform national systems on a voluntary basis.

Whilst this Framework has no legal basis and is not designed to override national law, its aim is to:

- Help the profession achieve recognition and regulation where this doesn't currently exist
- Provide patients with a standard of osteopathic care, no matter where they might seek treatment in Europe

The contents of this document will be kept under review as necessary. Where possible we have indicated if national requirements may provide for more or less stringent measures.

This document forms the basis of the European Framework for Codes of Osteopathic Practice (EFCOP)² and standards of education and training in osteopathy.

² European Framework for Codes of Osteopathic Practice. Forum for Osteopathic Regulation in Europe, 2007.

Section 1 Relevant knowledge for osteopathic practice

Knowledge of human dynamics including an understanding of how and why this is reflected in individuals' anatomy and their interaction with the physical and social environments. This knowledge will be drawn from relevant modern scientific and other sources supported by a critical consideration of research evidence. Other sources will include aspects of psychology, sociology and other relevant disciplines.

This knowledge will allow the recognition and identification of disease and pre-pathological states. The osteopath must continuously maintain and update this knowledge to inform clinical reasoning and decision-making in order to provide appropriate osteopathic treatment. There will be an expectation that this knowledge should be supported by research evidence wherever possible.

The osteopath should be able to demonstrate:

- 1.1 a detailed knowledge of human structure and function, with special emphasis on the neuro-musculoskeletal system. This should be sufficient to recognise, identify and differentiate between normal and abnormal anatomical structures and processes in the living body
- 1.2 an understanding that the presenting problem may mask underlying pathologies
- 1.3 a knowledge of human disease sufficient to inform clinical judgement, and to recognise disorders not suitable for osteopathic treatment
- 1.4 a knowledge of human psychology and sociology, sufficient to provide a context for clinical decision-making and patient management
- 1.5 the use of the principles of biophysics sufficient to understand the effect of forces acting within living matter especially in the effective use of such forces in the application of osteopathic techniques
- 1.6 an ability to locate, evaluate and apply relevant high quality research evidence to osteopathic practice



Section 2 Understanding of osteopathic concepts and principles

Osteopaths must demonstrate an understanding of osteopathic concepts and principles. These concepts and principles should be critically and continuously applied to patient care.

The osteopath should be able to demonstrate:

- 2.1** a comprehensive and critical understanding of principles and concepts of osteopathy and how these inform and guide rational clinical decision-making
- 2.2** an understanding of models of health, disease and illness and how these inform a critical consideration of practical patient care and management
- 2.3** a critical awareness of principles and practice of other relevant healthcare approaches
- 2.4** an understanding of how osteopathic principles are expressed and translated into action through a number of different osteopathic treatment and management approaches and how to select or modify techniques to meet the needs of an individual patient
- 2.5** a commitment to considering the patient as a whole and recognising that the presenting problem may be caused by underlying health concerns

Section 3 Interaction with patients

The therapeutic relationship in osteopathy is characterised by many ethical challenges for the osteopath and for the patient. A key characteristic of osteopathy is the use of informed touch and this needs mutual trust and confidence between the patient and osteopath. Osteopaths must be able to establish and maintain an ethical, sincere and appropriately empathetic relationship with a patient.

The osteopath must also be able to enter into a professional relationship with a patient to ensure that all actions and interventions are conducted in accord with their national code of practice / EFCOP. The osteopath must be able to demonstrate an understanding and commitment to equal opportunity issues.

The osteopath should be able to demonstrate:

- 3.1 an awareness and understanding of ethical issues likely to confront a practitioner and to have justifiable and acceptable management strategies
- 3.2 an ability to deal with uncertainty without loss of professional self confidence and the ability to manage the case
- 3.3 a range of integrated skills and self-awareness sufficient to manage clinical challenges effectively in unfamiliar circumstances or situations
- 3.4 an ability to maintain high standards of care in situations of personal incompatibility with a patient
- 3.5 a strong commitment to maintaining patient confidentiality and to act only with the informed consent of the patient in compliance with the national code of practice / EFCOP
- 3.6 an ability to maintain a high standard of professional effectiveness by adopting appropriate strategies for physical and psychological self-care during interactions with patients
- 3.7 a willingness to exchange and use critically the perspectives and approaches of other healthcare professions

Section 4 Personal qualities and skills

Osteopaths must be self-aware and have a conscious, mature and realistic insight to their personal strengths and limitations. Critical self-reflection will be developed to a high level and used to guide the effective use of clinical reasoning skills, clinical problem-solving skills and decision-making skills, and to manage clinical uncertainty both ethically and effectively.

The osteopath should be able to demonstrate:

- 4.1 a sufficient level of coordination and dexterity to deliver high standards of osteopathic care
- 4.2 a highly developed appreciation of personal and professional strengths and limitations sufficient to promote a commitment to active and planned self-development
- 4.3 an ability to recognise the need to seek assistance from professional colleagues
- 4.4 evidence of problem-solving and thinking skills to a level that informs and guides the interpretation of clinical and other data and contributes to effective clinical reasoning and decision-making
- 4.5 a commitment to engage in self-directed learning activities as an integral part of professional osteopathic practice
- 4.6 a willingness, to support and assist osteopathic colleagues
- 4.7 the practical application of theories and models associated with making professional judgements
- 4.8 an ability to care for him/herself and to operate with an appropriate degree of self protection consistent with maintaining an acceptable standard of care for a patient

Section 5 Communication

Effective communication is a key requirement for the delivery of high quality osteopathic care. It is primarily, but not entirely, related to interactions between the patient and an osteopath.

Patient care may also depend on the quality of communication with other osteopaths and healthcare professionals, and with any other parties involved in the patient's care.

Osteopaths must have highly developed interpersonal skills. They must be able to communicate effectively with patients from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, from a wide age range, and who might have a varying degree of willingness to disclose clinical information. Osteopaths must be able to tolerate and communicate with a companion or chaperone accompanying a patient. Highly refined non-verbal skills including palpation, auditory and visual recognition must complement good oral and written communication skills. Such non-verbal communication is used to strengthen, confirm or challenge data, information and insight gained from the case history.

Osteopaths must be able to communicate with diverse groups of individuals about the claims, aspirations, strengths and limitations of osteopathy and its practice. This should be from an informed perspective based on the critical evaluation of published research. This is particularly important as interest grows for the use of osteopathy within public healthcare systems.

The osteopath should be able to demonstrate:

- 5.1** an appreciation of the range and forms of human communication and their strengths and limitations in specific clinical encounters
- 5.2** the ability to select and move between different forms of communication with patients and colleagues whilst maintaining a commitment to ethical values and considerations
- 5.3** skill in relating, integrating and responding to information and data acquired by verbal and non-verbal means
- 5.4** an ability to speak from an informed perspective about osteopathy, its limitations, strengths and potential
- 5.5** the ability to discuss and critically evaluate research and other findings concerning the efficacy and application of osteopathic interventions and the therapeutic claims of other healthcare disciplines

Section 6 Identifying and evaluating patients' needs

Osteopaths must be able to operate within a high standard practice environment conducive to establishing an effective and secure therapeutic relationship with each patient.

Osteopaths must be sensitive to the concerns of the patient and identify their needs by taking a comprehensive and relevant case history. Osteopaths must also be able to conduct a thorough and detailed physical examination of the patient using observational, palpatory, and other relevant skills to inform clinical reasoning and differential diagnosis, and to guide the formulation of possible osteopathic diagnoses.

Osteopaths should be able to accurately record their findings and prognoses, justifying possible courses of action which reflect the critical interpretation of clinical findings and other relevant information.

The osteopath should be able to demonstrate:

- 6.1 effective and efficient completion of a detailed case history of the patient and an analysis of the patient's presenting complaint
- 6.2 a recognition of the relative importance of the bio-psychosocial context of the patient's presenting complaint
- 6.3 the appropriate arrangement for specific clinical investigations as required for a patient
- 6.4 the ability to conduct an effective biomechanical assessment of the patient
- 6.5 the ability to undertake a thorough, sensitive and appropriately detailed palpatory evaluation
- 6.6 the ability to generate a number of diagnostic hypotheses to explain the patient's presenting complaint to aid the formulation of a treatment plan or referral to another healthcare professional
- 6.7 the sensitivity and ability to consult effectively with the patient at all stages of the evaluation
- 6.8 an ability to recognise the characteristics and consequences of non-verbal communication and issues of ethnicity, gender, religious beliefs, sexuality, disability and socio-economic status as they may impact on the patient's health
- 6.9 the ability to generate complete and accurate records of the outcomes of the patient evaluation
- 6.10 an ability to generate and discuss the content of referral letters and other forms of communication with professional colleagues

Section 7 *Acquiring, using and enhancing palpation skills*

A defining characteristic of osteopaths is their effective use of a highly developed and refined skill of palpation. Palpation may be considered to be one of the primary communication channels for most osteopaths in undertaking their professional interactions with patients in terms of diagnosis, treatment and evaluation. They should be able to detect and respond to alterations of physiological and structural changes at all levels in the body of a patient and to monitor subtle changes.

The osteopath should be able to demonstrate:

- 7.1 a critical appreciation of the therapeutic value of touch and palpation
- 7.2 the use of relevant knowledge to recognise and understand the structure and function of the tissues during palpation
- 7.3 an advanced knowledge of the palpatory characteristics of the normal and abnormal functioning of discrete body tissues and systems
- 7.4 a high level of palpatory skill
- 7.5 a commitment to use palpation selectively as part of the evaluation process
- 7.6 the ability to use palpation effectively both as a diagnostic and therapeutic medium
- 7.7 the ability to make accurate and appropriate records of palpatory findings
- 7.8 the ability to use palpation in conjunction with other evaluation methods before forming a diagnostic hypothesis
- 7.9 the effective use of palpation as a means of continuously monitoring the effects of treatment

Section 8 Planning, monitoring and justifying osteopathic treatment

Osteopaths must be able to formulate a justifiable osteopathic treatment plan or an alternative course of action including referral to an appropriate healthcare professional if considered necessary. This will be based upon the professional judgement of the osteopath informed by a critical consideration of all of the facts and findings derived from the case history, clinical examination and other relevant information including tests from external sources where appropriate. Differential diagnostic thinking and clinical reasoning informed by the application of osteopathic principles will guide this judgement.

Osteopaths must be committed to maintaining the safety and wellbeing of the patient by being sensitive to the presence of possible underlying pathology or pre-pathological processes including the recognition of conditions contra-indicating the use of certain osteopathic interventions. The proposed course of action must be planned within the context of the anticipated outcomes, the expectations of the patient and with their informed consent. The osteopath should make every attempt to ensure that their patients understand the explanations provided to them.

Osteopaths must be able to gain the cooperation of the patient by the effective use of explanations and responses to questions using appropriate levels of detail and suitable non-technical vocabulary and incorporating recognition of the patient's own level of expectation. Referral procedures, if instituted, must be presented in the terminology and detail consistent with the expectations and requirements of a professional healthcare colleague. Decisions about patient care should also consider relevant high quality research.

The osteopath should be able to demonstrate:

- 8.1** a detailed analysis and reflection on information gathered during patient history taking and evaluation
- 8.2** the generation and justification of a number of diagnostic hypotheses for the aetiology of the patient's presenting complaint
- 8.3** the selection of an appropriate course of action based on a rational decision-making process which includes a critical consideration of personal limits of competence, the likely effects of osteopathic treatment, relevant high quality research and the patient's wishes
- 8.4** whether or not to treat the patient and if not, select the most appropriate course of action
- 8.5** the formulation of a treatment plan and prognosis

Section 9 Undertaking osteopathic treatment and patient management

Osteopaths must be able to justify the selection and use of any form of osteopathic technique or its modification and to only treat with the consent of the patient. Osteopaths must be able to monitor responses to treatment by means of palpation, clinical examination and patient feedback.

Osteopaths should involve the patient as partners in decisions about their care as far as possible. To gain informed consent osteopaths should explain to the patient the reasons for the treatment, the likely experiences, benefits and possible risks. Osteopaths must record their course of action in the case notes for possible future use.

Osteopaths must be able to recognise conditions and situations where a specific form of osteopathic intervention is contraindicated and to adopt alternative and effective approaches.

The osteopath should be able to demonstrate:

- 9.1 the ability to select and use a wide range of osteopathic techniques and patient management approaches
- 9.2 a thorough and critical understanding of the theory, principles and practice of osteopathy, and relevant high quality research
- 9.3 an awareness of the indications and contraindications of using specific osteopathic techniques or their modification
- 9.4 an ability to justify the selection and mode of use of an osteopathic treatment or approach for the care of an individual patient
- 9.5 the commitment and ability to monitor stringently the effect of treatment during and after its application
- 9.6 the ability to adapt an osteopathic technique and justify its use in relation to the palpatory feedback received from the patient's tissues
- 9.7 the ability to reflect on the patient's progress and modify accordingly the working diagnostic hypothesis and the approach to the management of the patient

Section 10 Evaluation of post-treatment progress and change

Osteopaths must be committed to continuous self-evaluation of their professional actions and activities. This is especially relevant to their assessment of the health status of a patient following an osteopathic treatment. Osteopaths need to maintain an honest and thoroughly accountable approach to the evaluation of the level of outcome experienced by the patient. This must include the accurate recording of factual evidence derived from evaluation of the patient.

Osteopaths must also be able to recognise and deal with unexpected and possibly damaging changes, and to incorporate their evaluation of these into a revised treatment plan agreed with the patient. Where necessary, osteopaths should refer to another healthcare professional or seek their advice.

The osteopath should be able to demonstrate:

- 10.1** the ability to gather and organise a comprehensive range of qualitative and quantitative data and evidence relevant to the response of an individual patient to osteopathic treatment
- 10.2** a justification for the decision to continue, modify or cease osteopathic treatment based upon the critical evaluation of the patient and any other relevant factors
- 10.3** the ability to recognise adverse reactions to osteopathic treatment and to initiate appropriate responses, including referral when appropriate
- 10.4** an open-minded approach and acceptance of treatment outcomes that do not conform to expectations, but may offer deeper insight to the clinical meaning of the patient's presenting problems
- 10.5** the ability and commitment to record evaluation findings and their interpretation accurately and accessibly in the case notes of an individual patient
- 10.6** a commitment to continuous self-monitoring to identify the potential influence of unintended effects whilst undertaking osteopathic treatment

Section 11 Promoting and maintaining health

A guiding principle of osteopathy is to ensure that the patient's body regains as much of its natural structural integrity and function as possible. For many patients this will mean a commitment to individual exercise, preventative measures, adapting lifestyle and dietary considerations, as well as making use of local healthcare facilities.

Osteopaths must be able to offer constructive and realistic advice and guidance to individual patients to help them maintain and, where possible, enhance their health status following osteopathic treatment.

The osteopath should be able to demonstrate:

- 11.1** a critical appreciation of the key concepts and organisation of health education and health promotion used in the relevant country of practise
- 11.2** an understanding of the significance and potential effect of bio-psychosocial and economic factors in helping patients to make informed choices about their personal healthcare maintenance
- 11.3** the ability to assist patients to undertake and become committed to self-care activities including exercise and lifestyle adjustments
- 11.4** the ability to offer realistic advice concerning the location and effective use of appropriate healthcare-promoting activities
- 11.5** an understanding of the importance for the professional to maintain health and care for themselves
- 11.6** an awareness of the potential benefits and limitations of referring an individual patient to other healthcare professionals

Section 12 Processing information and data

To deliver high quality healthcare, osteopaths must consider more than simply the ability to interact with the patient. Osteopaths must be able to record their findings accurately, and when appropriate, exchange information with other healthcare professionals. In addition, osteopaths must be capable of locating, selecting, retrieving and processing information as necessary and to reflect upon the use of this where required.

Osteopaths must be able to respond effectively to increasing demands and expectations to produce high quality written material and organised data. This may include the need to supply information to meet the requirements of competent authority/registering bodies, support claims for the purchase of osteopathic care or legal proceedings.

The osteopath should be able to demonstrate:

- 12.1** a level of skill in the use of information technology consistent with the effective and efficient management of a modern osteopathic practice including the ability to interact with other healthcare professionals
- 12.2** a basic standard of word-processing skills consistent with the production of written reports and presentations of high quality for referral and related purposes
- 12.3** an awareness of the principles of using spreadsheets and databases for research and related purposes
- 12.4** an awareness of managing and presenting financial and other data needed for compliance with legal requirements
- 12.5** an awareness of the manipulation of quantitative and qualitative data for audit and related purposes
- 12.6** effective use of data access and retrieval facilities necessary for subsequent qualification activities including continuing professional development and related purposes

Section 13 Providing a high quality environment for osteopathic healthcare

Osteopaths must be able to manage and organise an osteopathic practice efficiently and effectively to ensure high standards of patient care. This will include the need to be able to recruit and manage osteopathic colleagues, support staff and other relevant personnel. Osteopaths must also be accountable and responsible for the effective keeping of patient and other records in full compliance with relevant statutory regulations, external contractual obligations, legal requirements and their contract of confidentiality with patients (and employees if relevant).

Osteopaths should be aware of and willing to conduct clinical audit and monitoring as necessary. They must also adhere to national Health and Safety regulations applicable to the practice environment.

Osteopaths must be able to communicate appropriately with professional colleagues and other interested parties within a group practice. They must be able to act as effective team members depending on circumstance and context.

The osteopath should be able to demonstrate:

- 13.1** an awareness of the need to comply with the legal requirements of operating a modern osteopathic practice with the necessary facilities for patient and staff comfort. This includes adherence to national health and safety standards
- 13.2** an awareness of the need to maintain financial and other practice operation details in accordance with legal and ethical requirements
- 13.3** an awareness of and willingness to undertake clinical audit and monitor the quality of practice. This will contribute to the generation of operational and strategic plans
- 13.4** an awareness of the need to manage professional and support staff effectively and efficiently in accordance with identified practice needs and in compliance with legal requirements
- 13.5** the effective maintenance of patient records and information in compliance with legal and ethical requirements of confidentiality and peer support
- 13.6** an awareness of the need to interact effectively and to a high standard with external agencies including other healthcare professionals, insurance companies and public service organisations

Section 14 *Working with other healthcare professionals*

Osteopaths are independent primary contact healthcare professionals and need to work in partnership with other healthcare professionals to ensure best patient care. Many osteopaths receive referrals from medical and other healthcare professionals and a substantial number are working within multi-disciplinary healthcare teams.

Osteopaths should respect the potential contribution of other healthcare professionals to the wellbeing of an individual patient. Osteopaths should also be able to critically evaluate the claims of their profession in line with evolving high quality research.

The osteopath should be able to demonstrate:

- 14.1** a critical appreciation of the development of osteopathy and its contribution to healthcare provision in the country where they practise
- 14.2** an appreciation of the evolution and the current development of healthcare delivery with particular reference to primary healthcare
- 14.3** a critical awareness of the specific claims of a range of conventional and non-conventional healthcare professions and how these relate to the practice of osteopathy
- 14.4** a critical evaluation of the current claims of osteopathic practice worldwide and with respect to national circumstances
- 14.5** an understanding of the range and limitations of operational relationships between osteopaths and other healthcare professionals including referral procedures
- 14.6** an awareness of the need to participate effectively in the planning, implementation and evaluation of multi-professional approaches to healthcare

Section 15 Professional and ethical responsibilities

Osteopaths have a responsibility to deliver ethical, competent and safe osteopathic care for all patients. Osteopathy is a profession which places emphasis on patient care and involvement, moral integrity and confidentiality. Such criteria may shape the means by which entrants to the profession are selected, prepared and assessed.

Professional status therefore demands a commitment to the maintenance and development of high standards of osteopathic care for patients. Osteopaths must appreciate the role of professional self-evaluation and development in maintaining standards of care in accordance with the national code of practice and the EFCOP.

The osteopath should be able to demonstrate:

- 15.1** an appreciation of the concept and significance of professional regulation where appropriate and the healthcare regulatory systems operating in their country of practice
- 15.2** an appreciation of the significance of the individual's professional role to practise osteopathy safely, competently and lawfully
- 15.4** a commitment to abide by the standards of ethics and conduct stated in their national code of practice and EFCOP
- 15.6** a commitment to maintaining the integrity of the profession and not bringing it into disrepute by claiming qualifications, skills, experience or knowledge not possessed or with no right to use

Section 16 Audit and Continuing Professional Development

Osteopaths must be committed to undertaking clinical audit and continuing professional development in order to maintain and enhance their osteopathic practice.

This should be an ongoing process and may be used as registration / membership criteria by the competent authority / registering body.

The osteopath should be able to demonstrate:

- 16.1** a commitment to undertaking clinical audit and continuing professional development
- 16.2** an appreciation of the need for self-reflective practice and to document this, when necessary
- 16.3** an awareness of the need to be able to participate in, and contribute to, structured courses and conferences in relevant professional areas
- 16.4** an awareness of the need to be able to organise and participate in group activities relevant to the development and enhancement of osteopathy as a profession
- 16.5** an appreciation of the need to produce and submit, where relevant, self-audit reports to the standard required by the relevant competent authority / registering body
- 16.6** an awareness of the need to contribute to research and other educational activities to promote personal professional development and that of osteopathy

This document was ratified by the following FORE organisations in 2007:

Associação de Profissionais de Osteopatia (P)
Association of Osteopaths in Ireland (IRL)
Consejo de los Osteópatas de España (E)
Danske Osteopater (DK)
Federação Portuguesa de Osteopatas (P)
Federazione Sindicale Italiana Osteopati (I)
General Osteopathic Council (UK)
Irish Osteopathic Association (IRL)
Nederlandse Vereniging voor Osteopathie (NL)
Norsk Osteopat Forbund (N)
Österreichische Gesellschaft für Osteopathie (A)
Registro de los Osteópatas de España (E)
Russian Register of Osteopaths (R)
Registre des Ostéopathes de France (F)
Suomen Osteopaattiliito (FIN)
Suomen Osteopaattiyhdistys (FIN)
Svenska Osteopatförbundet (S)
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