

Special Inclusion

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The effect of osteopathic treatment on people with sub-chronic and chronic neck pain: A pilot study

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**Introduction:** Neck pain is a common problem in the general population and can be severely disabling and costly for the individual.<sup>1,2</sup> The aim of this study was to investigate if osteopathic management of people with neck pain would reduce their perceived pain and disability.

**Design:** Single cohort pilot study.

**Methods:**

Participants: Seventeen subjects with neck pain (mean age 34.8 [SD = 11.9] years, 7 males, 10 females). Subjects had a mean duration of symptoms of 168.8 weeks (SD = 292, range: 4–1040).

Intervention: A four-week course of osteopathic treatment at the Victoria University Osteopathic Medicine teaching clinic.

Outcome measures: McGill pain questionnaires (MPQ), visual analogue scales (VAS), and Neck Disability Index (NDI) were completed prior to the initial treatment and after treatments on weeks 2 and 4.

**Results:** Analysis with repeated measures ANOVA revealed statistically significant differences between pre and post scores for the MPQ ( $F_{2,32} = 17.35$ ,  $P = 0.001$ ), VAS ( $F_{1,62, 25.92} = 36.01$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ) and NDI ( $F_{2,32} = 14.63$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ). Pre–post effect sizes were large for MPQ ( $d = 1.28$ ), VAS ( $d = 1.57$ ) and NDI ( $d = 1.12$ ). Further testing using paired *t* tests revealed these differences to be significant between all time periods for the MPQ, and between the pre-treatment and 2 weeks and pre-treatment and 4 week periods for the VAS and NDI. When the cohort was subdivided into a sub-chronic (symptom duration less than 52 weeks) and chronic group (symptoms longer than 52 weeks), similar significant differences were found for both groups.

**Conclusion:** Self-rated pain and disability significantly reduced during the course of osteopathic treatment, and reductions were evident regardless of the chronicity of the pain. This pilot study suggests that osteopathic treatment may be effective for the management of neck pain.

**References**

1. Cote P, Cassidy JD, Carroll L. The Saskatchewan Health and Back Pain Survey: the prevalence of neck pain and related disability in Saskatchewan adults. *Spine* 1998;**23**:1689–98.
2. Cote P, Cassidy JD, Carroll L, Kristman V. The annual incidence and course of neck pain in the general population: a population based cohort study. *Pain* 2004;**112**:267–73.

<sup>☆</sup> These abstracts have not been subjected to the usual IJOM review process. They have been selected and reviewed by the ICAOR Review Committee, 2006. The abstracts are unedited and are published as received from ICAOR organisers.