**How Effective Is Osteopathy?**

A GP investigates.

These are comments made by Dr Laura Hollingworth and published in The Sutherland Cranial College Magazine (Summer 2012/No 34).

She wrote in 2011,

“Last year my pattern of recommendation for the treatment of a variety of musculoskeletal conditions altered significantly from physiotherapy to osteopathy, so my appraiser suggested I look at outcomes of treatment”.

The method she used was to look at the outcomes of 53 patients seen by the osteopath between October 2010 and December 2011.

Patients presented with low back, neck and shoulder, TMJ, Colic, Headache and migraine, Groin strain, and IBS.

Of those patients 37 did not require further GP appointments. Only 5 needed further appointments for pain killers or sick notes. 11 required further treatment or investigations.

In conclusion Dr Hollingworth said “This is a very simple study and should not be over-interpreted” but then goes on to discuss the findings.

Osteopaths are trained to diagnose and treat as primary healthcare practitioners and as such Dr Hollingworth states that “One patient was seen by the osteopath and referred straight back to the GP with a diagnosis of a lesion at C6 [in the neck]; “

This was confirmed by imaging and the patient required surgery.

Dr Hollingworth goes on to say in the discussion section, “...many of the referrals were straightforward Musculoskeletal problems and dealt with as such”, then adds, “...there was a subgroup which had more complex symptomatology where osteopathic treatment resolved unexpected symptoms”.

Finally Dr Hollingworth notes that and I quote directly, “From July 2011 onwards, the range of problems being referred became much wider and the rate of recommendation also increased.” And she then continues “I think the explanation for this is that I was learning more about osteopathy, both from personal experience and reading, and had more confidence in the treatment (and the practitioner).”

She concluded with a reflective comment “So-back to GP education”.

It is worth noting that all GPs and osteopaths have to undertake regular educational activity as part of their professional development and registration.

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