

A development agenda for UK osteopathy

Since the round of regional conferences last year, which included an open debate on the development needs of the profession, much has been going on behind the scenes.

The major stakeholders who together led the debate – the British Osteopathic Association, the General Osteopathic Council, the Council of Osteopathic Educational Institutions, the Osteopathic Alliance and the National Council for Osteopathic Research – have since met on several occasions and, from our discussions, we have formulated a ‘vision’ for the future and an outline action plan. This is set out overleaf.

It has been very satisfying to experience all the osteopathic stakeholder organisations working together and the ‘development’ planning has been harmonious and constructive. This bodes well for the future.

We shall continue to develop this agenda and, in so doing, we would welcome feedback on our early thoughts on this important work.

In mid-March we will come together with representatives of regional osteopathic groups from across the UK to further discuss these plans for the development of the profession.

It is our intention to keep everyone in the world of osteopathy fully informed as this work evolves, and, if you think you have a role to play in helping us achieve our challenging agenda, we would be glad to hear from you.

Developing the profession

Background

In the spring and summer of 2012, a series of debates took place around the country to consider the future development of the osteopathic profession.

Following those meetings, a stakeholder group comprising representatives of the British Osteopathic Association (BOA), the Council for Osteopathic Educational Institutions (COEI), the General Osteopathic Council (GOsC), the National Council for Osteopathic Research (NCOR) and the Osteopathic Alliance (OA), have met to discuss the emerging themes and how they could work together on a shared development agenda.

Aims and objectives

As an overarching objective, we have agreed the following:

Our aim in working together on the development of osteopathy in the UK is to enable the profession to meet its full potential in contributing to the healthcare of the nation. Osteopathy should have a valued role as an independent profession, with practitioners able, where they choose, to be integrated into the wider multi-disciplinary healthcare community. Such activities will help to support: enhanced dialogue with other professions; increased professionalism; the development of the evidence base, and postgraduate development.

Principles

We also established some guiding principles which we believe are important if the profession is to unite around a shared agenda where the benefit to the patients and the patients' needs are a core consideration:

- Development activity should, wherever possible, strive to show what is distinctive about osteopathy and support the capacity of the profession to promote itself.
- We should aim to build individual capability and capacity, enabling osteopaths to use their skills in their practice and for the benefit of the profession.
- We wish to create sustainable leadership and a robust infrastructure for osteopathy by helping osteopathic organisations build their corporate capability.
- It is essential not to restrict practice nor prevent a broad approach – we have no desire to disenfranchise any group within the profession.
- The collection of evidence needs to be a cornerstone of a compelling development agenda.

- Our development activities should embrace the role that individual practitioners' interpersonal and clinical skills play in determining the quality and outcomes of patient care.

Development projects

The stakeholder group (GOSC, BOA, COEI, NCOR and OA) has identified a 'menu' of projects to support development. It must be stressed that none of the activities identified would be mandatory regulatory requirements for osteopaths to maintain registration. The list of projects represents a starting point to drive development activity and some projects are underway already. Others require detailed development and we propose to continue to liaise with and invite input from the profession. We will continue to work together as we develop these projects with 'secretariat' support provided by the BOA.

At this time, we welcome feedback from every osteopath and osteopathic body. While every project will require detailed scoping, the initial list (in no particular order) is:

Evidence

Building on the positive experience of those practitioners who have collected patient feedback, we will develop the evidence base for osteopathy by systematically collecting Patient Reported Outcome and Patient Reported Experience data (known as PROMs/PREMs) and creating a vehicle for anonymous reporting of adverse events. Initial work in this area is already underway under the auspices of NCOR.

Service standards

Developing clear service quality standards for osteopathic service providers that would support those practitioners who wish to contract with the NHS or obtain a 'kite mark'.

Advanced practice

Developing means of quality assuring and accrediting advanced clinical training (accredited specialist practice). The project would identify the most appropriate ways of assessing and recognising advanced practice for the benefit of patients and practitioners. This project might also embrace wider aspects of the quality assurance of CPD/post-graduate course provision.

Regional support

Working with the regional osteopathic societies to identify how they can grow their activities and membership to support the delivery of CPD and act as a local community hub.

Mentoring

Providing the opportunity for new practitioners to access high-quality mentoring to ensure that recent graduates are able to develop and sustain themselves in practice and do not become isolated.

Career development

Explore the potential for and the criteria required for an 'Osteopathic Fellowship' award which might comprise a number of pathways, including: accredited specialist practice; research; education; and clinical or professional leadership.

Leadership

Considering the potential for an osteopathic leadership academy that would support the development of leadership skills within the osteopathic profession.

International collaboration

Developing stronger international links and alliances to ensure that the UK profession shares best practice in promotional, clinical, educational and research activities with the osteopathic community around the world.