

Osteopathy: Movement and Harmony

BY DR. ARI ROSEN

LIFE IS MOTION. LIFE is in motion. Not just obvious, kinesthetic movement, but subtle motion that is fluid and dynamic. There is large movement, such as a tree blowing in the wind, a fish swimming in the stream, or a person riding a bicycle. And, there is also the complex and intricate movement going on underneath all of this at a cellular level. The beautifully intertwined functioning of trillions of cells, connective tissue, and fluid culminate into these casual movements that we see and experience all around us.

While anatomy and physiology courses answer the complex question “How does this work?”, the more fascinating question may be “How is this able to keep working when problems arise?” One of the most amazing aspects of life is that living beings can actually heal themselves.

Throughout life our bodies exhibit constant and dynamic fluid motion within us. Whether we are swimming, walking, sitting, or reading a magazine, we are in motion. When we breathe in and out, our ribcage expands and contracts. There is blood, lymph, and cerebrospinal fluid circulating and fluctuating within. Every cell in our bodies is constantly exchanging fluid and nutrients that we metabolize to maintain homeostasis. This is a critical relationship occurring between structure and function. When the structure of our anatomy becomes strained, compressed, or restricted, it will function in a compromised state. This often results in incomplete healing or less than optimal function. We can help ourselves with our own improved relationship to movement, such as with deep breathing, improved posture, or exercise (yoga, Pilates, tai chi, or continuum, for example). Still, we sometimes need help. Manipulation of the body provides this help. Osteopathic Manipulative Medicine is an immensely therapeutic technique to treat the body in a healing and dynamic way.

Most forms of manipulation are direct. Practitioners directly engage the barriers of restriction and strain, and force or push the tissue where the practitioner would like it to go. Examples of this are traditional Chiropractic, Massage Therapy, and Rolphing. In Osteopathy, or Osteopathic Manipulative



Medicine (OMM), there are many different approaches used, and some do utilize direct action treatment. However, some DOs approach treatment more subtly, yet quite profoundly. In this way, the physician gently palpates the body and discerns how it is moving in its resting state. We listen to the story and description of the problem the patient describes, and observe movements noticeable to the eye, but with our hands, Osteopaths feel this dynamic fluid movement the body is constantly going through. We feel which tissues are strained or compressed, and which tissues are moving healthfully. By synchronizing with the motion present in the body, we then start a kind of dance with the body: constantly working to evaluate the tissue and subtly encouraging it to move toward a balanced place, in harmony with the tissue around it, and the body as a whole. When this is refined and perfected, the strain pattern will release, and the dynamic, fluid, healthy movement of the body will be restored. Once in this state of proper physiologic balance (circulation, nerve innervation, lymphatic drainage, etc), the body will have momentum to function properly and continue to heal itself. This approach is appropriate for almost any condition, and at any age, including children and newborns.

Osteopathic Physicians (or DOs, Doctor of Osteopathy) are licensed with all the same rights and privileges as Allopathic Physicians (or MDs, Medical Doctor) and work in all the same areas of medicine as MDs. If your body is having trouble healing itself, or medications and surgery are either not working or not your preference, Osteopathy is a gentle and reliable option for you to explore and experience. ■