

Diploma in Osteopathic Medicine

Introduction to the course

The Diploma in Osteopathy is a two-year course for medical doctors and physiotherapists. The course is designed to enable medical doctors and physiotherapists to acquire a set of core competencies that guide them in the diagnosis, management and treatment of their patients and form the foundation for the osteopathic approach to healthcare. The course is organised by ICOM – International College of Osteopathic Medicine Italy, and it follows the World Health Organisation (WHO) Benchmarks for Training in Osteopathy. On successful completion of the course, students receive a Diploma in Osteopathic Medicine from ICOM.

The WHO distinguishes two types of osteopathic pre-registration education, depending on prior training and clinical experiences of trainees. Type I education programs are aimed at those with little or no prior healthcare training, but who have completed high school education or equivalent. These programs are typically four-year, full-time programs with 1,000 hours of supervised clinical education. Type II education programs are aimed at those with prior training as healthcare professionals. These programs have the same aims and content as Type I programs, but the course content and length may be modified depending on the prior knowledge and training of individual applicants. The syllabus and curriculum for Type II programmes will vary depending upon the prior healthcare training and clinical experience of each individual student. Graduates of Type II programmes must demonstrate the same competencies of osteopathy as graduates of Type I programmes.

The Diploma in Osteopathic Medicine is a WHO Type II, non-university programme delivered over 2 years using a blended learning approach combining interactive online learning with 5 face-to-face seminars of 4 days (Thursday to Sunday) per year, complemented by 200 hours of supervised clinical education per year. Over the two years of the programme, students spend 320 hours in highly practical classroom sessions, 400 hours in supervised clinical practice and 200 hours in self-directed learning activities. Clinical education activities may include 1 week of supervised clinical practice in Italy if students want to take advantage of this offer, supervised clinical practice in the student's country of origin and online and face-to-face group supervision sessions.

Osteopathy

Osteopathy was founded in 1874 by Andrew Taylor Still, an American physician; osteopathic medicine (or osteopathy) is a system of manual diagnosis and treatment for a range of musculoskeletal and non-musculoskeletal clinical conditions. It is distinguished from other health care professions by the fact that it is practised according to an articulated philosophy (Seffinger, 1997). Its claimed unique philosophy of health care is supported by current medical practice with an emphasis on the unity of the body, interrelationship between structure and function, and an appreciation of the body's self-healing mechanisms (Seffinger, 1997; McPartland and Pruit, 1999).

One of its defining characteristics is the emphasis placed on the musculoskeletal system as an integral part of patient care (Rogers et al., 2002). Osteopaths utilize a wide range of therapeutic techniques to improve function and support homeostasis that has been altered by somatic dysfunction (WHO, 2010). Somatic dysfunction is described as the altered or impaired function of skeletal, arthrodiar, and myofascial components of the somatic (body) framework and their related vascular, lymphatic, and neural elements (DiGiovanna, 2005).

Since its inception, in 1874, osteopathic medicine has developed into two distinct forms of clinical practice. Whereas in the USA, osteopaths have full medical practice rights; in the UK or in Australia, osteopaths have a limited scope of practice with an emphasis on the provision of manual therapy (Hartup et al., 2010). In the UK, osteopaths operate as primary contact practitioners and follow a four or five-year academic programme of study. At the point of graduation, students are required to possess a clinical competence profile which enables them to effectively operate as autonomous health care practitioners. Although osteopathic curricula share commonalities with allopathic medical curricula, as a reflection of the osteopathic philosophy, osteopathic curricula emphasise the application of manual methods of patient examination and treatment. Notwithstanding this, students at the point of graduation are required to possess clinical reasoning capabilities similar to those of a graduating medical student. Clinical reasoning is widely recognised as the essential element for competent autonomous health care practice (e.g., Higgs and Jones, 2000; Jones and Rivett, 2004).

References

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Aim

The course will enable medical doctors and physiotherapists to further develop their pre-existing clinical competencies to integrate osteopathy, in a safe and informed way, in their existing clinical practice. Students will be exposed to a student-centred learning environment to promote the critical acquisition, development and integration of clinical knowledge and osteopathic evaluative and treatment skills, within the context of their pre-existing professional knowledge, skills, values and norms. This is underpinned by a critical understanding of osteopathic concepts. Newly acquired professional capabilities will be developed and consolidated in a supervised clinical education setting.

Intended Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, you should be able to:

- Critically appraise the osteopathic conceptual philosophy of clinical practice and its role in patient evaluation, treatment and management.
- Demonstrate a well-developed and integrated knowledge of normal and altered human structure and function applied to the process of clinical decision making.
- Demonstrate a well-developed and integrated knowledge concerning the impact of environmental, psychological and social conditions in the development of illness and disease.
- Demonstrate clinical evaluative skills and decision-making processes required for complex and unpredictable clinical situations.
- Select, implement and monitor osteopathic intervention by means of highly developed clinical reasoning in a manner that is safe, efficient and effective.
- Select and apply a range of structural osteopathic techniques ranging from soft-tissue techniques to high velocity low amplitude thrust techniques.
- Select and apply a range of cranial and visceral osteopathic techniques.

Entry requirements

Entry onto the programme is restricted to graduates in medicine and physiotherapy who have experience in musculoskeletal care.

Course Structure

Duration

- 2 years

Timetable

- 5 monthly seminars of 4 days (Thursday to Sunday) per year
- Online lectures, tutorials and meetings and group discussions
- Supervised clinical practice (200 hours per year, including 1 week per year in Italy if students want to take advantage of this offer)

Curricular Content

MODULES
Developing Knowledge for Osteopathic Practice
Clinical Skills for Osteopathic Practice 1: Structural Techniques
Clinical Skills for Osteopathic Practice 2: Cranial and Visceral Techniques
Osteopathic Clinical Practice

MODULE 1 - Developing Knowledge for Osteopathic Practice

Module overview

This module is focused on two critical elements for osteopathic practice. Firstly, it enables students to develop an in-depth and critical understanding of osteopathic concepts and models of evaluation and treatment and to relate those to existent healthcare models of health, illness, and disease, as means of informing their clinical reasoning and decision-making processes. The module also provides the foundation for the development of students' practical osteopathic evaluation and treatment skills, enabling them to apply and make sense of those skills; emphasis is placed on palpation and clinical observation skills. Secondly, the module enables students to apply their existing knowledge and skills of human structure, function, dysfunction, and disease, and to develop the knowledge and skill of osteopathic evaluation and patient management critically applying these in the context of patient care.

This module enables students to develop the competencies required to critically evaluate each patient with an osteopathic focus from the outset, and to develop a plan of care which is consistent with the conceptual basis of osteopathy, best practice, and patient safety.

Module aims

The aims of this module are:

- To enable students to develop a critical understanding of osteopathy as a healthcare profession, its founding principles, its status worldwide, and the key influencing factors on its development as a profession.
- To enable students to develop a critical understanding of the osteopathic conceptual philosophy of clinical practice, whilst contrasting it to their own current model of professional practice.
- To enable students to critically evaluate contemporary models of osteopathic diagnosis and clinical practice regarding their plausibility and underpinning evidence.
- To enable students to build upon their existing clinically applied understanding of human structure, function and dysfunction, and disease whilst integrating current evidence relevant to osteopathic practice. Students will develop the ability to critically apply their understanding of the relationship between disease and the physical, psychological, social and environmental domains and how this changes in relation to context and aging.
- To enable students to formulate robust and informed patient-centred osteopathic evaluation and management strategies, supported by an understanding of conceptual, theoretical and practical osteopathic knowledge and skills.

Module Learning Outcomes

On completion of this module students should be able to:

1. Discuss the concept of osteopathy as an autonomous healthcare profession, its history, development, and status.
2. Appraise the osteopathic conceptual philosophy of clinical practice, including the role of structure and function interrelationship and the biopsychosocial model of care in patient evaluation, treatment, and management.
3. Evaluate the plausibility of current models of osteopathic evaluation and patient management considering their underpinning theories and available research evidence.
4. Describe the theoretical and practical basis of palpation and observation and how they underpin osteopathic evaluation.
5. Apply knowledge of anatomy, physiology, human development, biomechanics, and pathology of the neuromusculoskeletal system in patient evaluation and treatment.
6. Critically evaluate the role of osteopathic concepts such as structure-function interrelationship in clinical management.
7. Critically evaluate the influence of psychological, socio-cultural, economic and occupational factors on health and illness behaviour.
8. Demonstrate the ability to formulate robust and informed osteopathic evaluation and management strategies, supported by an understanding of conceptual, theoretical, and practical osteopathic knowledge and skills that is appropriate to the patient individual needs.

Module content

- History of osteopathy and its development
- Regulation of osteopathy

- Healthcare models of health, illness and disease – a critical evaluation
- Osteopathic concepts in clinical practice – health, illness and disease, structure-function interrelationship, adaptation and compensation
- Somatic dysfunction – a critical evaluation
- Osteopathic models of evaluation and treatment: historical developments, plausibility and evidence base
 - The structural or biomechanical model
 - Tensegrity
 - Neurological model
 - Biopsychosocial model
 - Respiratory-circulatory model
 - The total osteopathic lesion concept
- Evidence base supporting osteopathic intervention
- Clinical Reasoning in Osteopathy
- Patient Examination skills - conducting observation in the standing, sitting and recumbent positions
- Palpation and Touch
- Review of the concepts of health, illness and disease
- Maladaptation, dysfunction and disease
- The role of the osteopath in relation to pathology
- Dysfunction, disease and their significance in osteopathic practice
- Medical evaluation and management of common conditions
- Movement, dysfunction and disease
 - Regional and local functional consequences, clinical presentation and management
 - Lower extremity
 - Lumbar spine and pelvis
 - Thorax
 - Upper Extremity
 - Head and neck
- Human development and aging
 - How changes in capacity and agency may predispose to pathology and disease
 - Implications for the neuromusculoskeletal system
- Pain management in osteopathic practice
- Osteopathic Patient Management
 - Complexity and clinical uncertainty
 - Pain management in osteopathic practice
 - Osteopathic evaluation: local and global dysfunction
 - Prognosis, short-, medium- and long-term plans
 - Osteopathic treatment and adjuvant modalities
 - Dealing with complex patients

- An integrated approach to patient management

Teaching and Learning Strategies (including assessment)

A range of teaching and learning strategies are used to promote the development of knowledge, skills and professional and personal values, which enable students to become critical, reflective and evidence-informed practitioners. The adopted teaching and learning strategies include online and face-to-face lectures to deliver core knowledge and promote discussion, Problem-Based Learning (PBL) small group tutorials centred on the discussion of clinically based problems, and tutor and student-led seminars. Regarding clinical skills, the theory, principles, and procedures are presented followed by a practical demonstration, where students will practice the techniques. Following practice, students critically reflect and discuss on their own practise of the technique demonstrated, which is reviewed by the whole group. Students are encouraged to continue to practise and consolidate their understanding of the knowledge and skills outside of the skills laboratory context.

The assessment includes the completion of a group assignment (60%) and an OSCE (Objective Structured Clinical Assessment) (50%). The student must achieve a minimum score of 50% to successfully complete the module.

MODULE 2 - Clinical Skills for Osteopathic Practice 1: Structural Techniques

Module overview

This is the first of two modules that provide students with opportunities to develop osteopathic specific clinical knowledge and skills which will enable them to effectively evaluate and manage their patients. In this module, students will develop practical clinical skills of osteopathic evaluation and osteopathic structural techniques. Students will have an opportunity to critically apply their developing osteopathic clinical capabilities under the guidance of clinic tutors in the module Osteopathic Clinical Practice.

Module aims

The aims of this module are:

- To enable students to develop clinical osteopathic evaluation and examination skills and critically apply and integrate them in the context of patient evaluation and care.
- To enable students to develop an understanding of the principles and concepts, indications and contraindications of a range of osteopathic structural techniques including soft tissue and Muscle Energy, mobilisation/articulation and High Velocity Low Amplitude (HVLA) thrust.
- To enable students to develop diagnostic palpation capabilities whilst appreciating its critical role in osteopathic evaluation and the application of technique.
- To enable students to become proficient in the application of osteopathic structural techniques such as soft tissue and muscle energy, mobilisation/articulation and HVLA techniques, whilst caring for the needs of their patients and themselves as the operator.
- To enable students to develop competencies in osteopathic clinical decision-making by being able to formulate appropriate, effective osteopathic management and treatment plans taking into account the role of multidisciplinary care.

Module Learning Outcomes

On completion of this module students should be able to:

1. Examine a patient using a range of appropriate clinical and osteopathic examination techniques and evaluate their subjective and objective clinical findings within the context of their patient presentation.
2. Formulate a range of hypotheses for the aetiology of a patient's clinical presentation, and generate short, medium and long-term management plans for the patient, based on both objective and subjective clinical information.
3. Select and demonstrate, after critically evaluating the needs of the patient, soft tissue and muscle energy, mobilisation/articulation, and HVLA techniques in all patient positions and areas. Justify their chosen technique in the context of indications, contraindications, patient presentation and morphology. Justify the components of the technique and tissue states under consideration using palpation while performing the technique.
4. Demonstrate effective and sensitive patient care through the use of well-developed practical skills, whilst caring for themselves.

Module content

- Osteopathic evaluation
 - Case-based diagnostic reasoning, case history taking, clinical examination and osteopathic evaluation, interpretation of clinical investigations focusing on the following regions:
 - Lower extremity
 - Lumbar spine and pelvis
 - Thorax
 - Upper Extremity
 - Head and neck
- Osteopathic structural/direct techniques
 - Soft tissue techniques: mechanism of action, indications, contraindications, longitudinal, cross fibre, inhibition and effleurage. Application considering: rhythm, force, direction, moments, couples, tissue response, depth, amplitude, use of levers, use of applicators, use of contact point, tissue reaction, patient response, care of self, patient sensitivity.
 - Muscle Energy Technique: mechanism of action, indications, contraindications and limitations.
 - Passive articulation/mobilisation techniques: mechanism of action, indications, contraindications. Application considering: rhythm, force, direction, moments, couples, fulcrums, tissue response, tissue tension, end feel, amplitude, quality of movement, use of levers, use of applicators, use of contact point, tissue reaction, patient response, care of self, patient sensitivity.
 - High Velocity Low Amplitude (HVLA) techniques: mechanism of action, indications, contraindications. Application considering: force, direction, fulcrums, tissue response, tissue tension, end feel, use of levers, use of applicators, use of contact point, tissue reaction, patient response, care of self, patient sensitivity.

Teaching and Learning Strategies (including assessment)

Students completing this module will be given the opportunity to attend online and face-to-face lectures and seminars, problem-based group tutorials, practical skills sessions and to engage in self-directed learning activities. Practical sessions will enable application of the underpinning theory and interpretation of their value to them as future osteopaths; and the development of their manual therapeutic clinical skills. Problem-based learning activities provide students with an opportunity to integrate newly acquired knowledge and skills in the context of patient evaluation and care. The assessment includes the completion of a OSCE (Objective Structured Clinical Assessment) (60%). and continuous in-class assessment (40%). The student must achieve a minimum score of 50% to successfully complete the module.

MODULE 3 - Clinical Skills for Osteopathic Practice 2: Cranial and Visceral Techniques

Module overview

This is the second of two modules that provide students with opportunities to develop osteopathic specific clinical knowledge and skills which will enable them to effectively evaluate and manage their patients. In this module, students will develop practical clinical skills of osteopathic evaluation and osteopathic cranial and visceral techniques. Existing and newly acquired knowledge and skills are applied and integrated in their clinical practice through well-developed clinical reasoning capabilities. This is facilitated by means of classroom-based problem-based learning activities and supervised clinical practice in the module Osteopathic Clinical Practice.

Module aims

The aims of this module are:

- To enable students to consolidate clinical osteopathic evaluation and examination knowledge and skills and critically apply and integrate them in the context of patient evaluation and care.
- To enable students to critically appraise the principles and concepts, indications and contraindications of a range of osteopathic cranial and visceral techniques.
- To enable students to develop capabilities in the application of cranial and visceral techniques, whilst caring for the needs of their patients and themselves as the operator.

Module Learning Outcomes

On completion of this module students should be able to:

1. Informed by a good clinical reasoning, conduct a contextually relevant clinical examination and appraise both subjective and objective clinical findings.
2. Select and demonstrate, after critically evaluating the needs of the patient, a limited range of cranial, visceral, and functional techniques to the level of late novice, taking into account patient presentation and formulated management plan.

Module content

- Osteopathic evaluation
 - Case-based diagnostic reasoning, developing competence in case history, clinical examination and osteopathic evaluation, and interpretation of clinical investigations.
- Osteopathic technique
 - Cranial techniques: critical appraisal of their principles and concepts, mechanism of action, indications, contraindications. Developing capability in the application of cranial techniques.
 - Visceral techniques: critical appraisal of their principles and concepts, mechanism of action, indications, contraindications. Developing capability in the application of visceral techniques.

Teaching and Learning Strategies (including assessment)

Students completing this module will be given the opportunity to attend online and face-to-face lectures and seminars, problem-based group tutorials, practical skills sessions and to engage in self-directed learning activities. Practical sessions will enable application of the underpinning theory and interpretation of their value to them as future osteopaths; and the development of their manual therapeutic clinical skills. Problem-based learning activities provide students with an opportunity to integrate newly acquired knowledge and skills in the context of patient evaluation and care.

The assessment includes the completion of a OSCE (Objective Structured Clinical Assessment) (60%). and continuous in-class assessment (40%). The student must achieve a minimum score of 50% scale to successfully complete the module.

MODULE 4 - Osteopathic Clinical Practice

Module overview

This is a practice-based module undertaken in its entirety in the clinical setting. In order to promote the development of clinical competence, the students' clinical education experience is progressive in nature and at different stages of the programme the demands and responsibilities placed upon them change. In this module, students attend designated clinics for a total of 400 hours. Students' learning is promoted through observation of clinical tutors' interactions with patients as well as through their active participation in the process of patient evaluation and treatment. The managed and planned attendance to the clinics provides students with an opportunity to develop their osteopathic clinical reasoning capabilities as a means of consolidating their knowledge and theoretical and practical osteopathic capabilities and to further develop a critically reflective and evidence-informed focus to their learning and clinical practice.

Module aims

The aims of this module are:

- To enable students to integrate clinical osteopathic evaluation and examination knowledge and skills, including osteopathic clinical reasoning capabilities, in the context of supervised clinical practice.
- To enable students to take professional responsibility for the care of their patients in osteopathic practice with appropriate support and guidance.
- To enable students to apply their developing theoretical and practical knowledge and skills in the care of their patients, in the context of supervised clinical practice.
- To enable students to further develop their critical reflective practice capabilities.

Module Learning Outcomes

On completion of this module students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate the ability to conduct a relevant case history and clinical examination, and critically analyse their subjective and objective clinical findings to formulate a range of osteopathic diagnostic and conceptual hypotheses.
2. Demonstrate the ability to implement, monitor and re-evaluate their proposed patient management plan including the ability to safely apply a range of osteopathic techniques and adjuvant strategies.
3. Practice osteopathy with due regard for the health and safety of themselves, their patients, and colleagues.

Module content

Students are required to complete a minimum of 400 hours of clinical education at designated clinics. Clinical education activities include 1 week of supervised clinical practice in Italy if students want to take advantage of this offer, supervised clinical practice in the student's country of origin and online and face-to-face group supervision sessions.

The emphasis of this module is on the development of clinical reasoning as a means of consolidating and further developing osteopathic capabilities in patient evaluation and treatment, and to support the develop a critically reflective and evidence-informed focus to their learning and clinical practice. Students' active participation in the process of care involves full case history taking, full patient evaluation, differential diagnosis, treatment and ongoing management. Students will have opportunities to observe, reflect upon and critically appraise the individual approaches to patient evaluation, treatment and management adopted by clinical tutors and other students. Their learning process is be supported by participation in group discussion on specific cases and subsequent self-reflection; individual and small group tutorials designed to practise palpation and osteopathic technique, case history taking and clinical examination. Students are expected to work with minimal direct supervision for uncomplicated routine examinations and osteopathic interventions; manage their own caseload with guidance from the clinical tutor; clearly identify their own strengths and limitations seeking help accordingly; and articulate their rationale for osteopathic intervention.

Teaching and Learning Strategies (including assessment)

Students work in the clinic and have a caseload similar to that expected of a newly qualified osteopath. Their learning experience happens largely through minimal supervised patient care; this is complemented by observations of clinical interactions between patients and clinical tutors. Their clinical education continues is supported by a short series of planned and structured tutorials designed to develop and consolidate their clinical competence. The clinical supervisors will use a range of active and demonstrative teaching and learning strategies, complemented by expository or interrogative techniques in clinical practice.

The assessment includes a Final Clinical Competence Assessment (80%) and continuous assessment (20%). The student must achieve a minimum score of 50% to successfully complete the module.

Teaching and Learning methods

Overview of Teaching and Learning methods

The course will use a variety of teaching and learning methods designed to:

- help students develop active learning techniques;
- help students attain the learning outcomes for the course;
- encourage students to integrate and apply their learning to osteopathy;
- increase students' enjoyment of the learning process.

Lectures are used to convey information and knowledge where it is not easily accessible in text books or research papers. They are also used to introduce topics, giving students a broad overview of the area before they begin their independent study or to clarify issues which we know students find difficult when undertaking independent study. In each case, students must undertake the pre- or post-lecture reading to benefit from the session.

Practical Sessions/Stations are a key part of osteopathic education because students must develop a repertoire of osteopathic skills, many of which require substantial motor ability. Students also need to know what it feels like to be on the receiving end of osteopathy and so in the practical sessions they will not only act as an osteopath but will also spend a considerable percentage of their time as a model. We use these practical sessions to introduce students to osteopathic skills whilst at the same time relating the practical work to associated theory so that they become aware of how practise is inextricably linked to theory. During practical technique sessions, typically students will be given the opportunity to discuss the theory underpinning the technique and then the tutor in charge will demonstrate the technique on a student model. They will then be given the opportunity to practise the technique on their peers. Students will be encouraged to practise on several peers, to develop their understanding of different subjects and where is the norm. After practising the technique, students will be invited to critically reflect on their experiences individually and as a group to further enhance and refine their skills.

Tutorials can take several forms but often consist of a small group of students working together with a lecturer. Tutorials are an ideal opportunity for students to discuss areas which they find challenging or to explore controversy. Whatever the form of the tutorial, i.e. 1-1, face-to-face or online, students will be expected to bring ideas to the group and to actively participate in the activities.

Discussions and Debates may be an integral part of one of the other small group learning sessions, or debates may be held in their own right. As students' progress through the course they will find that the theoretical grounding for osteopathy is not always straight forward and there is often controversy over approaches to intervention. Debates will either be student led or we may invite lecturers to participate in the discussion and the students will be required to rationally assess the arguments.

Clinical education is a key teaching and learning strategy in this course. Students will be given the opportunity to work in a clinical practice setting under the direct supervision of a qualified osteopath

who acts as a clinic tutor, hence benefiting from a wide range of learning opportunities within such a context. Their clinical education is supported by a series of planned and structured individual and small group tutorials designed to encourage the development and integration of theoretical and practical aspects of the programme with an emphasis placed on the development of osteopathic clinical reasoning and clinical skills within the context of osteopathic health care practice. The participants' learning is supported using a reflective clinical logbook, which is expected to provide evidence of their clinical experiences, subsequent self-reflection and plans for self-direct learning activities.

Assessment Strategy

The assessment includes:

- Continuous assessment
- Group presentations with structured feedback from members of faculty and students.
- OSCE (Objective Structured Clinical Assessment)
- Final Clinical Competence Assessment
- To graduate, students must have passed all assessments. In the event of failure of an assessment, students will be given the opportunity to resit that assessment (same format). If they fail the same assessment twice, they will be given the opportunity to retake the course.