

## 4° Congresso Nazionale ROI

Le prove di efficacia: il patto terapeutico tra paziente ed osteopata

# Is it the time to adopt a psychologically informed management in osteopathic practice?

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Chronic musculoskeletal pain is a highly prevalent condition typically seen among Italian osteopaths, as reported in a quantitative survey commissioned by the Registro Osteopati d'Italia (ROI) in 2016. In the last few decades, chronic pain also has received a great deal of attention in the research literature with significant advances in the understanding regarding pain perception, which is now accepted to involve complex sensory (Wand et al., 2011), emotional (Simons et al., 2013) and cognitive (Pelletier et al., 2015) brain circuits. Given the advances in pain understanding, several authors in the field of manual therapy (Foster et al., 2011; Nijs et al., 2013; Darlow et al., 2015; O'Sullivan et al., 2015), have argued that we should



move beyond the traditional structure/pathology-oriented explanations of pain in treating the enigma of chronic musculoskeletal conditions.

In literature, there is also promising quantitative and qualitative evidence that shows how musculoskeletal therapists have moved to apply a broad biopsychosocial view in the evaluation and management of chronic pain disorders with some barriers in terms of resistance in adopting a BPS model in clinical practice (Sanders et al., 2013; van Wilgen et al., 2013), lack of standardisation in the teaching of psychosocial (PS) factors assessment (Cruz et al., 2012), or feel unprepared to manage PS that influence recovery (Singla et al., 2015; Synnott et al., 2015; Zangoni and Thompson, 2017).

With regard to Italy, there is no research examining how the BPS dimension is considered, perceived and integrated by osteopaths in approaching chronic pain assessment and management. In particular how osteopaths perceive and conceive this model in relation to how they attempt to balance the biomechanical and biopsychosocial components of chronic musculoskeletal conditions with their patients. For this reason, we conducted a qualitative study using in-depth semi-structured interviews. Our results showed how osteopaths displayed a greater orientation towards the biomedical dimension of chronic pain than the biopsychosocial (BPS) dimension. Although the importance of the BPS model has been recognised as a part of the osteopathic philosophy in clinical practice, and the role of PS factors were considered important in pain experience, the osteopaths



considered in this study highlighted lack of knowledge and skills to assess and address psychosocial risk factors in the management of chronic sufferers. These findings indicate the need for osteopaths to pursue such skills and knowledge in professional training programs and development, in order to acquire a more operational holistic view in managing chronic sufferers.

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