



10° Congresso Nazionale ROI

BOLOGNA 20-21 GIUGNO 2025

L'OSTEOPATIA TRA LE PROFESSIONI SANITARIE
Prospettive di Prevenzione e Promozione della Salute

The Actual Role and Place of Osteopathic Care The Case of Osteopathy Europe (OE) Countries

Patrick van Dun, MSc, DO

Conflict of interest



Osteopath since 1993

- Private practice as an osteopath in Mechelen (B) and Habichtswald (D)

Independent researcher

- Member of the Board of Trustees of the Centre of Osteopathic Medicine Collaboration (C.O.ME)
- Member of the Research Committee of Osteopathy Europe
- Working group member of the International Consortium on Manual Therapies (ICMT)
- Member of the International Advisory Board of the International Journal of Osteopathic Medicine (IJOM)



Identity

a state of unity, coherence and continuity, shared pursuit of interests and setting of boundaries

Assmann und Frieze: Identitäten, Erinnerung, Geschichte, Identität 3, 1999, 2.Aufl., Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag



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Roi
REGISTRO DEGLI
OSTEOPATI D'ITALIA

Osteopathic Professional Identity

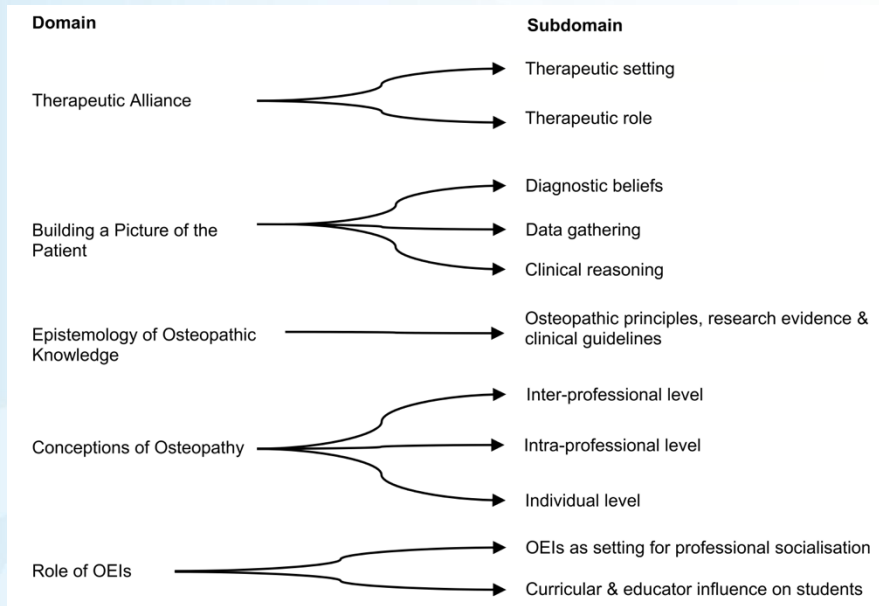
professional beliefs and values

- person centred
- mainly manual in diagnosis and treatment
- systemic (whole-person approach)
- salutogenetic
- function
- ...



Osteopathic Professional Identity

possible variables that may play a role in the formation of this identity?



Osteopathy

primary contact and **patient-centred** healthcare discipline, that emphasizes the interrelationship of structure and function of the body, facilitates the body's innate ability to heal itself, and support a **whole-person approach** to all aspects of health and healthy development, principally by the practice of **manual** treatment



Actual role and place in regulated countries

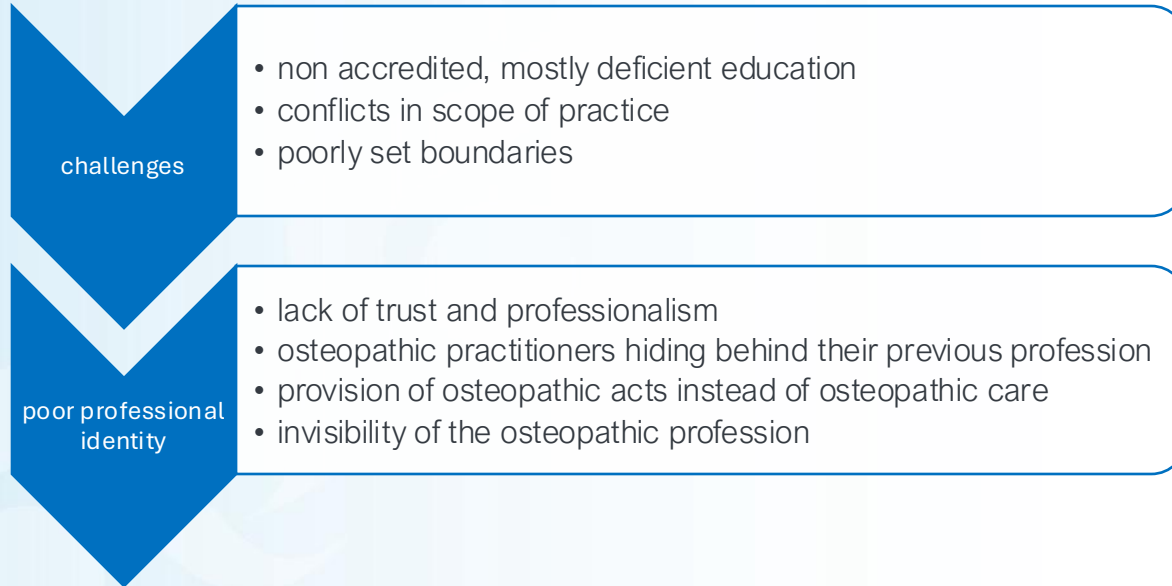
Country	Year of regulation	Regulated as	Education
Cyprus	2020	First contact HP	University MSc
Denmark	2018	First contact HP	BSc
Finland	1994	First contact HP	240 ECTS University of Applied Sciences diploma
France	2002	First contact	No university equivalence*
Iceland	2005	First contact HP	BSc
Italy	2021	HP (first contact?)	3 years of university training
Luxembourg	2018	First contact HP	MSc
Malta	2003	First contact HP	BSc
Norway	2021	First contact HP	4 years full-time education
Portugal	2014	First contact HP	BSc (240 ECTS)
Switzerland	2016	First contact HP	MSc (280 ECTS)
UK	1993	First contact HP	BSc (but 90% are now MSc)

Legend: HP = Healthcare Profession; MSc = master degree; BSc: bachelor degree. *: A training framework; 4,860 hours for high school graduates; 1,894 hours for physiotherapists; 700 hours for physicians.



Challenges for non-regulated countries

the majority of the profession strives for an independent health care profession



Blurred image

osteopathic practitioner

Question/ Country	IT (2023; n=6,580)	BE (2018; n=357)	ES (2018; n=517)	DE (2017- 2018; n=1,175)	AT (2020; n=338)	PT (2020; n=222)
Advertising exclusively as an osteopath	66%	82%	22%	34%	17%	40%

Table 1: Overview of how osteopathic practitioners profile themselves in different European countries.



A large, light blue, blurred image of a person's head and shoulders, positioned in the upper left and center of the slide. The person appears to be looking towards the right.

Blurred image

patient/client

although 64% of Belgians believe that osteopathy is a **separate discipline within health care**, 64% and 46% think that it is a **specialisation** of respectively physical therapy or medicine



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van Dun P, Dobbelaere E, Simons E. Une étude quantitative mesurant la connaissance et l'image de l'ostéopathie en Belgique pour le compte de l'Union Professionnelle des Ostéopathes de Belgique (UPOB-BVBO), 2020, Bruxelles.



Patient experiences

- **whole-body assessment**, connecting multiple body regions, in-depth examination, employing multiple manual techniques, education about their condition(s) and advice on exercise and lifestyle strategies
- experience osteopathic care as **a more systemic approach** to the person that not only addresses their symptoms in a very effective way but also offers back more mobility and functionality
- the impact of osteopathic care also seems to have had an **effect on their psychological well-being** and on functions of which they were previously unaware



What kind of medicine?

WHO: osteopathy is traditional, complementary or non-conventional medicine



What kind of medicine?

National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH)

people often use 'alternative' and 'complementary' interchangeably, but the two terms refer to different concepts:

- if a non-mainstream approach is used together with conventional medicine, it's considered **"complementary"**
- if a non-mainstream approach is used in place of conventional medicine, it's considered **"alternative"**



What kind of medicine?



‘The same interdependent processes of regulation and professionalisation that dominated the nineteenth-century history of orthodox medicine are now under way in relation to many heterodox disciplines of healing ... the use of complementary medicines has become increasingly **mainstream** ...’



Medical or allied health profession

First line medical practice

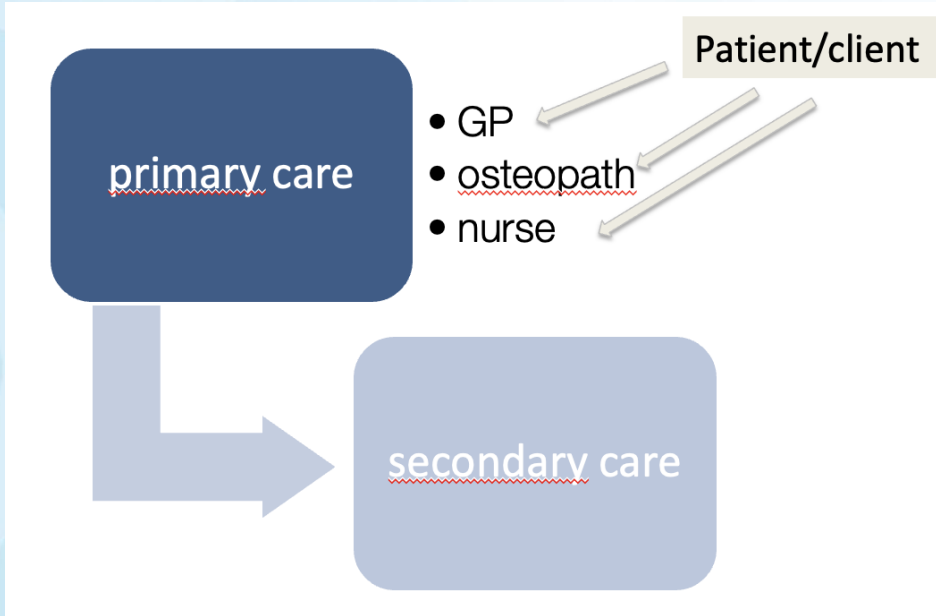
Country (year)	N	%
AT (2019)	264	78.1
BE (2018)	318	89.1
ES (2018)	478	92.5
FR (2022)	1,107	75.8
IT (2023)	3,540	53.8
PT (2019)	204	91.9
Subtotal	5,911	62.4
GE (2018)	1,010	86.0
Total	6,921	65.0

Allied health profession

Country (year)	N	%
AT (2019)	58	17.2
BE (2018)	66	18.5
ES (2018)	368	71.2
FR (2022)	560	38.3
IT (2023)	2,428	36.9
PT (2019)	127	57.2
Subtotal	3,607	38.1
GE (2018)	690	58.7
Total	4,297	40.34



Place for osteopathic care

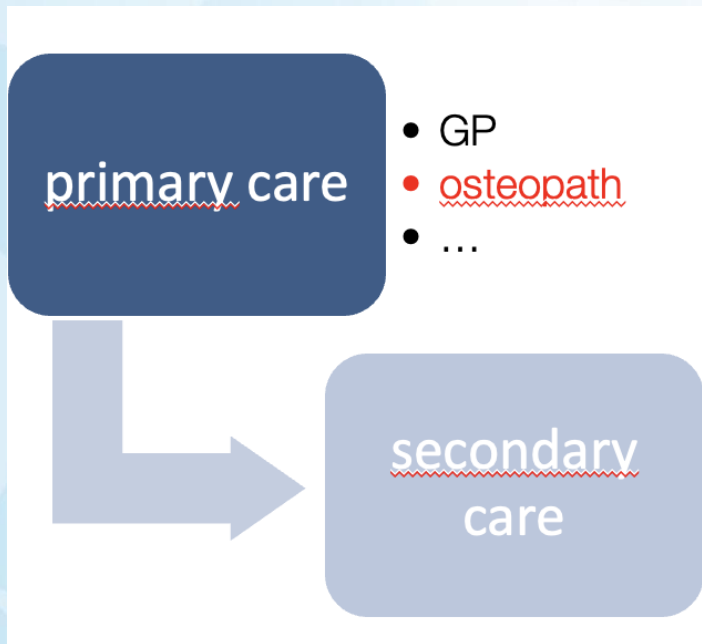


Primary care

the provision of integrated, accessible health care services by clinicians who are accountable for addressing a large majority of personal health care needs, developing a sustained partnership with patients, and practicing in the context of family and community



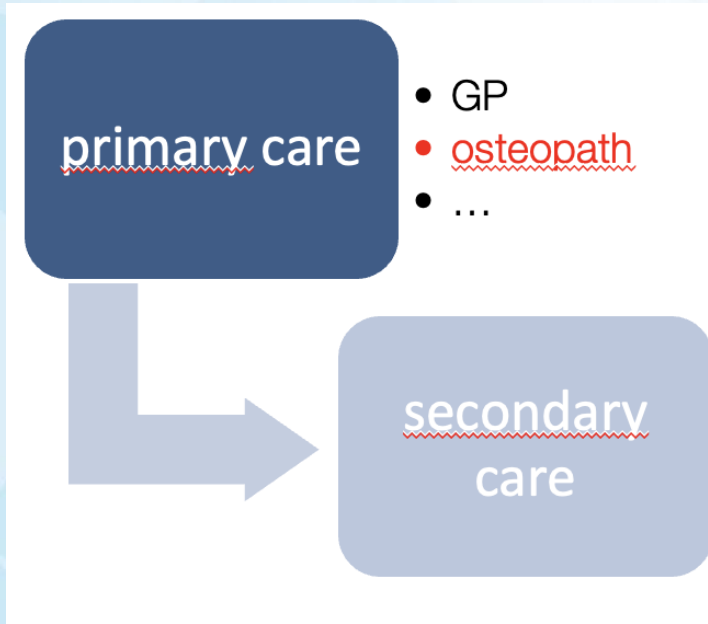
Place for osteopathic care



- well educated in diagnosis and management of MSK conditions
- provide better care and prevention
- greater patient satisfaction
- more cost-effective
- less adverse events
- reduce the workload of the GP
- ...



Place for osteopathic care

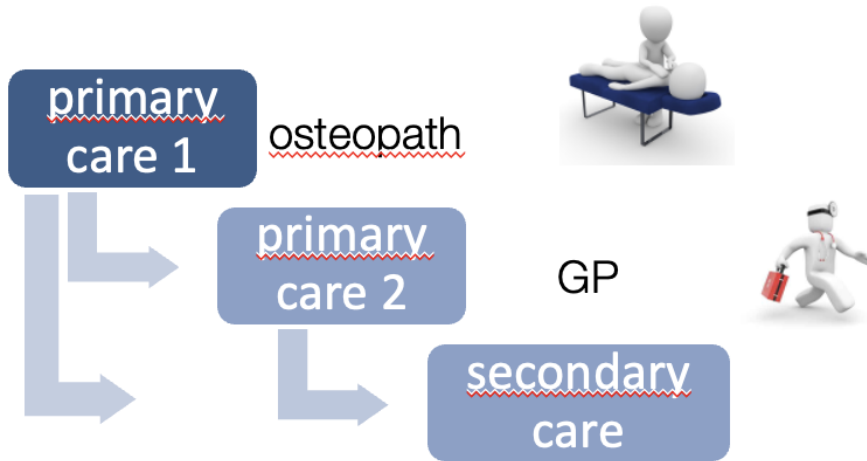


- well educated in diagnosis and management of MSK conditions
- provide better care and prevention
- greater patient satisfaction
- more cost-effective
- less adverse events
- reduce the workload of the GP

- it seems to work for non-MSK conditions as well



Place for osteopathic care



patient :

- “my GP only gives me medication”
- “there is nothing to be done”
- “I was told to live with this problem”
- ...



Place for osteopathic care

PC 1 or “front-line primary care”
PC 2 or “route of second line referral”

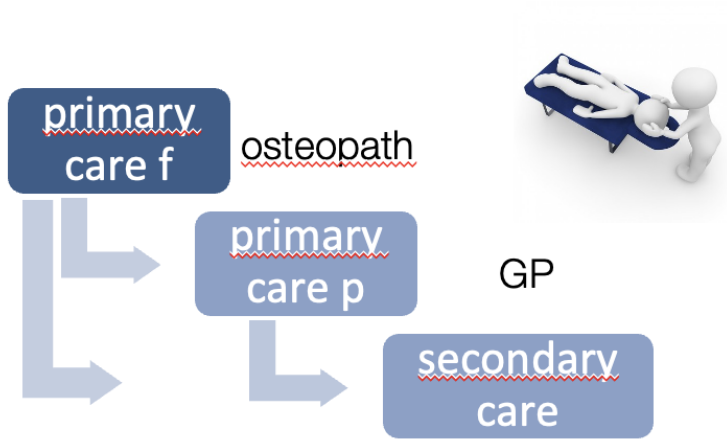


patient :

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Place for osteopathic care

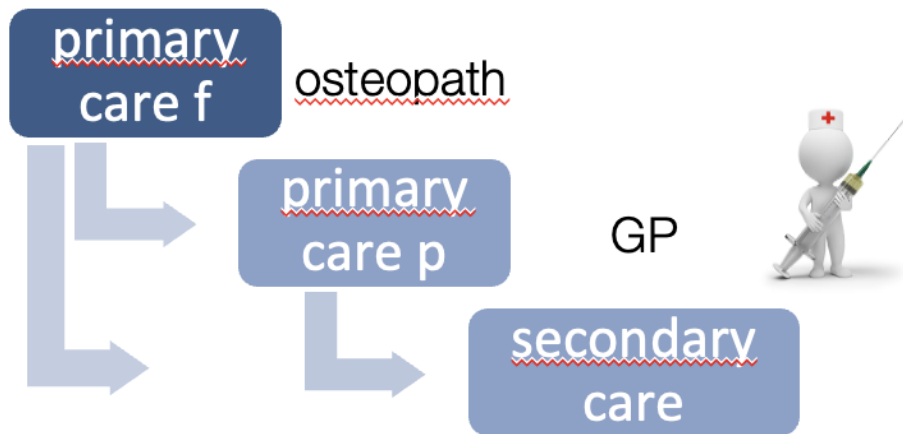


primary care “function”

- function in its broadest sense
- focussing on physiology
- reduce allostatic load
- providing touch
- providing sense of coherence
- taking into account enactivism (dynamic interaction between a patient and his environment)
- coaching pain self-management
- ...



Place for osteopathic care

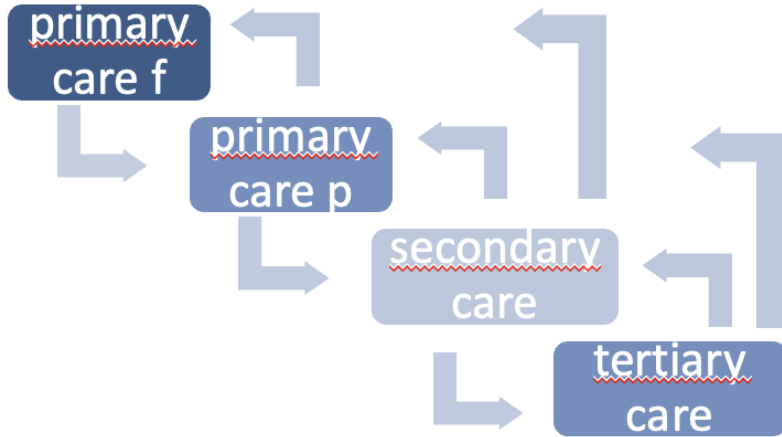


primary care “pathology”

- traditional medical model of diagnosis and medical treatment (medication)



Place for osteopathic care

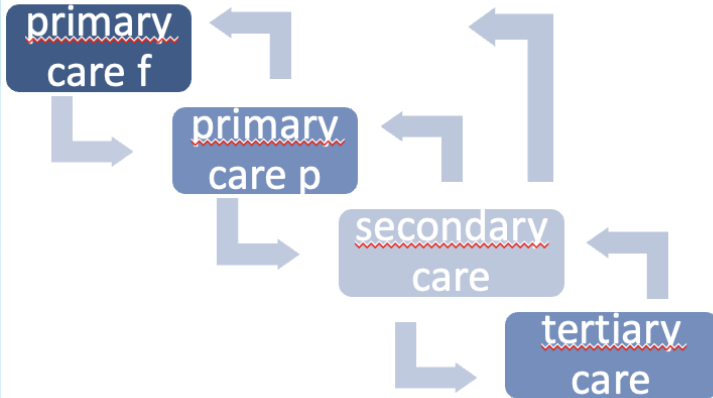


- a 43 year old woman with oral squamous cell carcinoma (OSCC) of the tongue.
- status after partial tongue resection and a peeling of the tumour in the area of the tongue base; resection of 18 lymph nodes via a neck dissection; a complete dental restoration; an intravenous port catheter was placed under the right clavicle and a combined chemoradiotherapy was performed



Place for osteopathic care

psychotherapy
physical therapy
speech therapy

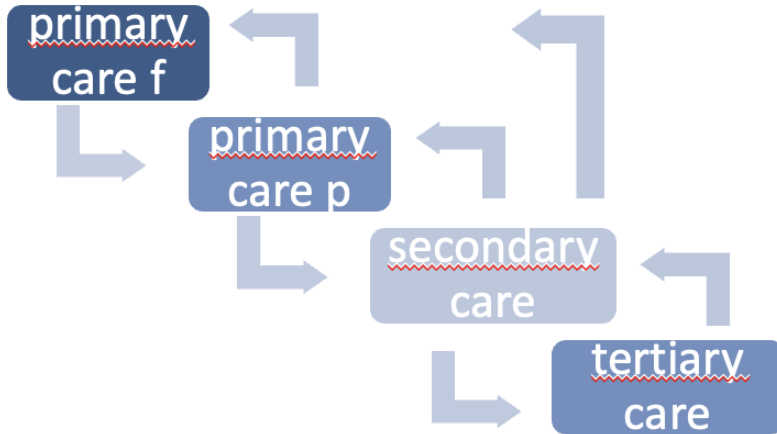


- a 43 year old woman with oral squamous cell carcinoma (OSCC) of the tongue
- rehabilitation in a multidisciplinary setting with **psychotherapy, physical therapy and speech therapy**
- progression was made on all levels but shoulder-neck complaints in connection with swallowing and articulation problems, as well as low back and abdominal pain and a feeling of heaviness in both legs remained



Place for osteopathic care

osteopathic care



- she experiences osteopathic care as the unifying factor of all the other therapeutic measures that have previously been implemented
- "I am always surprised how my complaints are connected in the whole body"



“A profession justifies its existence only by meeting the societal needs not met by any other profession”





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Grazie per l'attenzione