

MEDIA RELEASE



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Osteopaths support call for Back Pain to be a National Health Priority Area

The Australian Osteopathic Association (AOA) has supported calls for the Australian government to list back pain as a national health priority area in Australia, after the publication of an article in the Medical Journal of Australia.

This appeared timely at the commencement of its annual Osteopathy Awareness Week during 3-9 May, 2009.

The article highlighted that 80% of people experience back pain during their lives and 10% will experience significant disability. It further highlights that back pain is one of the most common long-term health conditions and one of the most significant health related work concerns.

"Back and neck pain is a serious issue for most Australians. Of the 30 000 patients consulting an osteopath every week, around 80% seek advice, diagnosis and treatment for back or neck related conditions" stated Dr Ben Field, Osteopath and AOA National President.

"Back pain is a complicated condition that requires thorough skilled diagnosis, and a range of treatment and rehabilitation strategies for both its physical and psycho-social components. Masking symptoms with pain relief is always costly and often ineffective; while ongoing pain is certainly detrimental to the emotional and physical wellbeing of the patient." continued Dr Field.

Osteopaths use a wide range of clinical skills with proven effectiveness. A resolute attack on the problem of back pain would save the Australian economy billions of dollars, while contributing significantly to people's well-being and general health.

The AOA believes the government has previously failed to address this serious health issue; there is a lack of policy development or funding directed to long term management of back pain.

"Osteopaths are well placed to treat people in the community; and so to reduce burdens on waiting times, improve access to GP's or hospitals and most importantly help people to stay active and maintain a high quality of life" explained Antony Nicholas, AOA Executive Director

Mr Nicholas further stated *"It is time for the government to acknowledge this as a serious health issue affecting most Australians. It must plan to fund effective treatment regimes. Coordinated treatment may not be based solely around purely surgical or pharmaceutical responses, but addressed through better integrated treatment using the full range of health professionals, including Osteopaths"*.

Osteopaths are university trained, government registered, allied health professionals who generate over \$200 million in the economy each year. Osteopathy is a proven and safe treatment for back and neck pain, and has been practiced for over 100 years in Australia.

There are over 1400 Osteopaths practicing in Australia. You can find the one nearest to you by visiting www.osteopathic.com.au or calling the AOA on 1800 467 836.

Media Contacts:

Antony Nicholas (AOA Executive Director)
b. 02 9410 0099 m. 0409 814 499
www.osteopathic.com.au