

Osteopaths call on governments to support those suffering for back pain

The Australian Osteopathic Association (AOA) is holding its annual Osteopathy Awareness Week during 1-7 May, 2011. Osteopathy Awareness Week focusing on profiling osteopaths and their place within primary health care and maintaining healthy Australians.

The AOA is calling on Federal and State Governments to explain why osteopaths and the 30 000 patients who see an osteopath every week with back or neck pain are being ignored in the primary healthcare system.

The Australian Osteopathic Association (AOA) has supported previous calls by researchers for the Australian government to list back pain as a national health priority area in Australian, yet two years later there has been no government action on this debilitating condition.

In May, 2009, the Medical Journal of Australia 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.

Further Australian Institute of Health and Welfare has suggested back and neck pain cost the Australian economy \$8 Billion per year.

"Osteopaths are skilled manual therapists who are perfectly placed to treat acute and chronic back pain in the community, whether alone or in combination with other health professionals, such as GPs. Timely and effective treatment can speed up recovery and assist in preventing further injury or unnecessary attendance in hospitals." stated Dr Damien Guengerich, Osteopath and AOA National President.

"Back pain is a complicated condition that requires thorough skilled diagnosis and a range of treatment and rehabilitation strategies; however regular professional health care can prevent ongoing acute conditions and reduce the economic burden on individuals and the economy." continued Dr Guengerich.

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.

Antony Nicholas, Executive Director of the Australian Osteopathic Association 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 undergo 5 years of university training, are government registered, allied health professionals who generate over \$250 million in the economy each year. Osteopathy is a safe treatment for back and neck pain, and has been practiced for over 100 years in Australia.

There are over 1600 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.

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