



## Media Release

### OSTEOPATHY AWARENESS WEEK – APRIL 3 - 9, 2006 GPs CAN REFER PATIENTS WITH CHRONIC PAIN TO OSTEOPATHS

**February 20, 2006:** GPs can now refer patients to Osteopaths for chronic pain treatment under the Medicare Plus scheme. Patients diagnosed with chronic pain by a GP may receive a \$45.85 Medicare Plus rebate for each osteopathic service under the Enhanced Primary Care Plan (EPC). Refer to [www.medicareaustralia.gov.au](http://www.medicareaustralia.gov.au) for more information.

The Australian Osteopathic Association (AOA) is holding its annual Osteopathy Awareness Week April 3 - 9, 2006. This year's theme, '**prevention is better than cure**', focuses on how osteopaths can also assist people of all ages to prevent injuries that occur very easily in daily life.

Osteopaths are highly trained in treating chronic pain, including chronic back or neck pain, as well as prevention of injuries, treatment of injuries and post-surgery rehabilitation. Osteopaths encourage individuals to proactively prevent injuries and ailments, which in the long term leads to better overall health and less time and money spent on treatment.

A 2004 census of osteopaths conducted by the Australian Osteopathic Association (AOA) showed that just over 50% of osteopathic patients present with complaints of chronic pain, that is, pain lasting more than 12 weeks<sup>1</sup>. According to that same census, 27.3% of patients seen by an osteopath complain of lumbar or spine pain and 24.4% present with neck pain.

Osteopathy is a form of drug-free, manual medicine that focuses on total body health by treating and strengthening the musculoskeletal framework. It positively affects the body's nervous, circulatory and lymphatic systems.

*"Osteopathy is a unique holistic approach to health care. We do not simply concentrate on treating the problem area, but use manual techniques to balance all the systems of the body,"* explains Mr. Peter Parker, Federal President of the AOA.

Studies on the effects of osteopathic treatments demonstrate the high success rate osteopaths have in treating pain. An Australian study on the effect of osteopathic treatment on people with chronic and sub-chronic neck pain found that during the course of osteopathic treatment self-rated pain and disability was significantly reduced<sup>2</sup>.

The test patients in the study were given osteopathic treatments over a four-week period that included muscle energy and counterstrain techniques, as well as soft tissue

massage and articulation. This course of treatments considerably decreased the quality, intensity and disabling effect of neck pain, regardless of whether the pain was chronic or sub-chronic.

According to a Canadian study, two out of three people will suffer from neck pain at some time in their life<sup>3</sup>. Neck pain can be just plain irritating and annoying, but in the worst scenario also severely debilitating. Neck pain is a prevalent reason for absence from work, and is given more often as an excuse than complaints of low back pain in some industries<sup>4</sup>.

The aim of all osteopathic treatment is to restore the body's natural ability to heal itself using biomechanical principles in conjunction with lifestyle improvements and a healthy diet. Consideration of psychological factors, nutrition, exercise and stress reduction strategies all form a part of osteopathic treatments.

Osteopathy is recognised by the Motor Accidents Authority, WorkCover and the Department of Veteran's Affairs. All major private health funds offer rebates on Osteopathic treatments.

To find your nearest Osteopath, visit the Australian Osteopathic Association's web page at [www.osteopathic.com.au](http://www.osteopathic.com.au) and click on 'Search'. For more information about Osteopathy and its health benefits, call 1800-4-OSTEO (1 800 467 836).

Ends

*Released by the Australian Osteopathic Association*

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<sup>1</sup> Osteopaths Census 2004, Australian Osteopathic Association.

<sup>2</sup> Fryer J, Alvizatos J, Lamaro J. The effect of osteopathic treatment on people with chronic and sub-chronic neck pain: a pilot study. *International Journal of Osteopathic Medicine* 2005;**8**:41-48.

<sup>3</sup> Cote P, Cassidy JD, Carroll L. The Saskatchewan health and back pain survey: the prevalence of neck pain and related disability in Saskatchewan adults. *Spine* 1998;**23**:1689-98.

<sup>4</sup> Anderson HI, Ejertsson G, Leden I, Rosenberg C. Chronic pain in a geographically defined population: studies of differences on age, gender, social class and pain localization. *Clin J Pain* 1993;**9**:174-82.