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The goal of the Osteopathic Physician (D.O.) is to assist the body's natural ability to heal itself with all of the accepted medical treatments, including the hands-on approach in which they are additionally trained—Osteopathic Manipulative Treatment (OMT). Osteopathic Physicians can diagnose and treat all conditions, perform surgery, and prescribe all medications.

This article will review a few knee conditions that I commonly deal with in my practice—knee cap degeneration (wearing down of the lining under the knee cap), meniscal tear, tendon / ligament strains, and arthritis.

### **Knee Pain, Arthritis and OMT**

#### **Knee Cap Degeneration**

Knee cap degeneration can be caused, among other things, by frequent falls compressing the knee cap against the underlying bone causing wear and tear of the cartilage lining, shortening of one side of the knee muscles causing misalignment of the knee cap, compensatory strain of the knee from lower back injuries or limping from foot problems.

Treatment may include a complete mechanical analysis of the knee and other joints. Balancing ligaments that are strained with local deep friction and ultrasound therapy to reduce inflammation and promote recover. Muscular stretching deep soft tissue release and craniosacral treatments can be used to release and improve previously sustained stress and strains.

#### **Meniscus Problems**

Meniscus is commonly known as the 'cartilage' that tends to get damaged during heavy landing on your feet along with a twisting motion. There are actually two in each knee that ordinarily absorb shock and frequent strain, e.g. during racquet ball, tennis or running.

It is important to get a complete picture of the stress and strains that are imposed on the knee. Osteopaths are able to evaluate your knee mechanics to reduce further injuries to the knee joint.

Osteopathic Treatment of mild or minor meniscal tear may provide pain relief once the knee has been examined in relation to the low back, hip and foot. Additional stress on your knee can come from limping due to back pain or strained ankle. The osteopath can assess how you have been overloading your knee and mechanically wearing down your meniscus. Osteopathic assessment will be the basis for long-term pain relief. Don't forget, damaged meniscus will not repair itself. Therefore, it is important to find the reason for your problem.

Minor meniscal irritations can be relieved with osteopathic treatment by correcting imbalances in muscles, balancing strained ligaments and correcting any biomechanical problems of the feet. Craniosacral techniques are also used to decompress any previous trauma sustained.

Many people with knee pain will not need surgery. Because proper osteopathic management can prevent recurrences and long-term discomfort.

### **Tendon/Ligament Strains**

Pain felt at the sides of the knee or just below the knee cap tends to be from a strained ligament or a pulled tendon. Ligaments are not elastic like muscles and will usually be a cause of pain from direct injuries like football, racquet ball, tennis, running or mechanical problems. Dropped foot arch and arthritic hip can cause secondary strain on the knee joint. Certain yoga positions can also cause ligamentous strain on the knees.

The osteopath may use local deep friction to reduce adhesion and promote healing, followed by ultrasound therapy to reduce inflammation and pain. Osteopaths often treat other areas of the body to correct the mechanical imbalance. In some cases treating the hip helps heal the knee. Giving arch supports can also reduce knee pain. Osteopaths do not just treat the site of the pain but will look at other areas that may be contributing to the cause of pain.

### **Arthritis**

It is a common mistake to think that only aged people can suffer from arthritis. Degeneration or wear and tear of the joint lining (cartilage) can occur from excessive sports, repetitive twisting of the joint and heavy falls. When the lining on the bones begins to wear down, the underlying nerves are exposed, causing pain (Osteoarthritis). These processes are not that different from a tooth wearing down and only cause pain when the nerve is exposed.

Mild and moderate osteoarthritis can be helped by osteopathic treatment. Mechanical analysis of the pelvis and lower leg can help manage the problem by realigning imbalances in the foot, ankle, knee and hip. Osteopathic manipulations help to release stiff joints, stretch tight muscles and soften tense muscles are corrective measures to reduce further strain to the knee.

Swelling and pain are the two most common symptoms reported by patients. Most people will ignore these symptoms until they get worse. The osteopath will be able to alleviate these symptoms but prevention is better than cure. See the osteopath for a thorough assessment before your pain gets worse.

Osteopaths are quite good at analyzing knee problems because we take into consideration mechanical problems elsewhere in the body that have direct and indirect connections with the knee. We also work with podiatrists (foot specialists) when further analysis is required for foot related problems.