



**Dr. Alla Boohoff, M.D., DO**

**Family Medicine & Osteopathic Manipulative Treatment**

650 Central Avenue, Suite A  
Cedarhurst, NY 11516

516.295.1924  
doctoralla@hotmail.com

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 look at how Osteopathic Manipulative Treatment (OMT) can help with lower back pain.

### **Lower Back Pain and OMT**

More than 90% of episodes of low back pain are of mechanical origin and most resolve spontaneously within 1-2 weeks. In about 30% of patients episodes can last as long as a month but chronic low back pain of more than 3 months duration accounts for less than 3% of all cases.

Mechanical low back pain is particularly associated with occupations that involve heavy lifting, bending or twisting such as manual laboring or nursing, but people whose job involve awkward static posture or prolonged driving are also at increased risk. Episodes of occupationally related low back pain are twice as common in adults over the age of 40 years. The overall prevalence is similar in both sexes but recurrences are more common in men.

The underlying cause for the problem can vary from disk damage, spinal instability, nerve compression, muscle injury to ligament damage. It is not uncommon for people to have more than one damaged structure.

Muscle spasms accompany all types of back pain. Muscle contraction (spasm) is one of the body's protective mechanisms when your back is injured. Pain at the sides of your spine indicates associated muscle cramps that can be relieved with osteopathic soft tissue manipulation.

Osteopaths will use therapeutic massage, strain/counter-strain techniques to re-balance the muscle groups, deep inhibition to reduce adhesions, muscle energy techniques to lengthen and stabilize muscle contraction, and muscle rehabilitation to strengthen muscle groups.

All these techniques are available to the osteopath. The most important benefit when seeing an osteopath is the evaluation- and diagnosis-process that looks at every patient and plans the treatment program specific to them. Osteopaths are renowned for their ability to use their hands to resolve a person's problem, also known as "hands on" treatment.

Osteopathic manipulation is proving to be particularly effective in treating lower back pain. Several studies claim that manipulation may shorten the duration of painful symptoms. In one 2000 study reported in *The*

*Journal of the American Medical Association*, 95 patients receiving manipulation with soft tissue massage treatments had significantly more improvement in symptoms even though they reported their pain as being "severe" or "very severe."

There is even more recent evidence that supports osteopathic treatment for lower back pain. A study published in the Nov. 4, 2004 issue of *The New England Journal of Medicine* concludes that patients with chronic lower back pain can be treated effectively with manipulation. The study found manipulation to be more effective than other treatments for lower back pain and lower in cost.

During the 12-week study, patients were treated with a variety of accepted treatments for lower back pain such as pain medicine, anti-inflammatory medication, active physical therapy, Trans-coetaneous Electric Nerve Stimulation (a device that provides a slight electrical current to an affected area using adhesive pads), and hot/cold packs. All of these forms of treatment, including manipulation, were shown to be effective for treating lower back pain. However, manipulation was associated with lower costs and less medication.

Marilyn Wagner is one patient who didn't need a peer-reviewed study to know that osteopathy works. The 63-year-old Cedarhurst, NY, woman has a lifelong history of asthma and back problems from severe scoliosis (curvature) of the spine.

"When I got up in the morning, I would be bent double," Wagner says. "It would take a couple of hours before I straightened up." She had been to numerous medical doctors for her respiratory and back problems and had seen a chiropractor for her back without lasting effect.

Last year she started getting osteopathic manipulative treatment (OMT), the hands-on Osteopathic method. Now she can stand up straight first thing in the morning, and she's eliminated at least half the asthma medicine she was taking. "All I know is that it works," she says.

As requested by readers, I'm including a few simple 'First Aid To Lower Back Pain' suggestions:

- Use ice compress as soon as possible for 10 minutes to reduce inflammation. Take a break for 10 minutes and repeat 3 times. This can be done every 2-3 hours for the first 1-2 days.
- If the pain is severe, make an appointment with the osteopath.
- If the pain persists after two days, see the osteopath. Take note that your body takes longer to recover if you delay your treatment.
- If in doubt, call the osteopath for advice.