



Case-Base Discussion – 26th March 2024 (Ref 358)

Case presented by Osteopath: Claire Short

On the back of media coverage of King Charles's and Princess Catherine's diagnoses of cancer, our discussion today focused on the signs and symptoms we might see in the clinic, our role in screening for cancer, and the part we can play in helping patients to manage pain, either due to the cancer or occurring concurrently.

Specific cases discussed include:

- A melodramatic patient, who had been treated at the practice for many years for a range of symptoms including headaches, presenting with new onset of headache. Apart from mentioning earache, she was feeling well, with no obvious red flags. She was treated by the osteopath twice for what appeared to be the "normal" cervicogenic headache; however, she was subsequently diagnosed with an inner ear tumour after GP referral for MRI.
- Prof Bill Ribbans, who had no overt symptoms of prostate cancer, was diagnosed on the basis of sudden changes in PSA levels, rather than raised PSA levels. In this case, a digital rectal examination was more reliable in diagnosing the cancer than blood tests.
- A patient with acute spinal symptoms following a fall, for which the GP diagnosed arthritic-related pain. However, the osteopaths treating the patient suspected something more sinister due to acutely intense levels of pain and significantly raised BP. It turned out to be a metastasis from undetected lung cancer.
- Other cases relating to patients who chose not to disclose that they had been diagnosed with cancer, and how we mitigate this in practice. A pre-consultation medical screening form could be one way of avoiding this situation, with questions to include whether the patient has had, or is having any ongoing investigations.

Screening

As Steven mentioned, whether it is helpful to carry out routine breast cancer screening is debated in the book Mammography Screening (Truth, Lies and

Controversy) by Peter Gøtzsche, but as a rule of thumb if a patient detects a lump, mammography is essential.

The age-specific acceptable PSA levels can be found here - NICE Guidelines (NG12), but it is important to note that PSA levels are not always raised in cases of cancer, and other tests may need to be carried out, as in the case of Prof Bill Ribbens.

Some very useful advice from today was that prostate cancer and Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma can be a precursor of PMR in male patients, so it's also worth excluding any red flags at this point.

Indications for treatment

We discussed that, while it is of great concern to find out that a patient under our care has been diagnosed with cancer, healthcare practitioners have a vital role to play in the treatment and management of these patients, not only in providing support to them and their families, but also in helping to alleviate symptoms that may or may not be related to the cancer itself. There is no evidence to show that soft tissue massage leads to the spread of cancer, any more so than physical exercise, and if we can do anything to help improve a patient's quality of life, within the parameters of safety and quality in practice, then the indications to treatment will often outweigh the contradictions.

Linking this discussion with the OPS Themes

A – Communication and patient partnership

A1 You must listen to patients and respect their individuality, concerns and preferences. You must be polite and considerate with patients and treat them with dignity and courtesy.

A2 You must work in partnership with patients, adapting your communication approach to take into account their particular needs and supporting patients in expressing to you what is important to them.

B - Knowledge, skills and performance

B1 You must have and be able to apply sufficient and appropriate knowledge and skills to support your work as an osteopath.

B2 You must recognise and work within the limits of your training and competence.

B3 You must keep your professional knowledge and skills up to date.

B4 You must be able to analyse and reflect upon information related to your practice in order to enhance patient care.

C - Safety and quality in practice

C1 You must be able to conduct an osteopathic patient evaluation and deliver safe, competent and appropriate osteopathic care to your patients.

C4 You must take action to keep patients from harm

C6 You must be aware of your wider role as a healthcare professional to contribute to enhancing the health and wellbeing of your patients.

D Professionalism

D10 – You must consider the contributions of other health and care professionals, to optimise patient care.

Linking this discussion with the Chiropractic Code

Principle C – Provide a good standard of clinical care and practice

C1 Obtain and document the case history of each patient, using suitable methods to draw out the necessary information.

C5 Develop, apply and document a plan of care in full agreement with the patient. You must check the effectiveness of the care and keep the plan of care under review. A more formal reassessment of the effectiveness of the plan of care must be undertaken at intervals that suit the patient and their needs. All subsequent modifications to the plan of care must be discussed and agreed with the patient and properly documented.

C6 Select and apply appropriate evidence-based care which meets the preferences of the patient at that time.

C7 Follow appropriate referral procedures when making a referral or a patient has been referred to you; this must include keeping the healthcare professional making the referral informed. You must obtain consent from the patient to do this.

Principle F – Communicate properly and effectively with patients, colleagues and other healthcare professionals

F1 Explore care options, risks and benefits with patients, encouraging them to ask questions. You must answer fully and honestly, bearing in mind patients are unlikely to possess clinical knowledge

Principle G – Maintain, develop and work within your professional knowledge and skills

G1 Keep your knowledge and skills up to date, taking part in relevant and regular learning and professional development activities that aim to maintain and

develop your competence and improve your performance and the quality of your work.

G3 Recognise and work within the limits of your own knowledge, skills and competence.