

422 - Paediatric Osteopathy - Threats and Evidence

With Steven Bruce and Dr Jerry Draper-Rodi

The discussion concerned the current debate around paediatric and obstetric osteopathy, particularly the movement in Europe against these practices. It explores the evidence and concerns around the safety and effectiveness of osteopathic treatments for infants and children.

The guest speaker was Dr. Jerry Draper-Rodi, an osteopath with a doctorate in professional practice. He is the director of the National Council for Osteopathic Research (NCOR) and heads up research and knowledge exchange at the University College of Osteopathy.

Although Dr Draper-Rodi is an osteopath, and his work has concentrated on osteopathy, he was keen to emphasise that his comments applied in large part to chiropractic care. He also emphasised the strength of the research links between the 2 professions.

Key Points

- There has been a recent movement in several European countries, including Sweden, Finland, France, and Germany, where medical societies and groups of pediatricians have made statements advising against patients bringing their babies to see osteopaths.
- The main concerns appear to be around the safety of osteopathic manipulations on infants, with a lack of evidence supporting the effectiveness of these techniques.
- The osteopathic profession has been slow to respond to these criticisms, and there is a need for more research and data to demonstrate the safety and efficacy of pediatric osteopathic care.
- Osteopaths generally do not use high-velocity thrusts on infants, but rather focus on gentle mobilization and soft tissue techniques. However, the profession has struggled to clearly communicate this.
- The evidence for the effectiveness of osteopathic care in certain paediatric conditions, such as supporting premature infants, is stronger than for others like colic.
- There is a need for the osteopathic profession to improve communication with other healthcare providers and the public to better explain the nature of their practice and the evidence supporting it.

- Several European countries have made statements advising against patients bringing their babies to see osteopaths, citing concerns around safety and lack of evidence.
- A systematic review found no evidence that mobilizations or manipulations would be effective for managing conditions within the paediatric population.
- Osteopathy Europe is leading efforts to collect data on the effectiveness of paediatric treatment. The NCOR Research Network is also collecting data and NCOR provides an app for collecting Patient Reported Outcomes.
- There is a growing focus on understanding and communicating the osteopathic models and approaches used in paediatric care, rather than just promoting the techniques themselves.