



Osteopathic International Alliance · 142 E. Ontario St., Chicago, IL 60611 USA

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November 17, 2018

Carmen Montón, Minister
Ministry of Health
Paseo del Prado, 18,
28014 Madrid
SPAIN

Re: The Osteopathic Medical Profession

Dear Minister Montón,

I am writing to provide clarification regarding the osteopathic medical profession and, more specifically, osteopathy.

The Osteopathic International Alliance (OIA) is the leading organization for the advancement and unity of the global osteopathic profession. As an “organization of organizations,” the OIA unifies osteopathic medicine by connecting schools, regulatory bodies, and regional, national, and multi-country groups. Our mission is to encourage systems of education and regulation that will ensure high standards for safe and effective health care from osteopaths and osteopathic physicians.

In February 2018 the OIA was admitted into official relations with the World Health Organization (WHO) as a non-governmental organization, and we maintain an active program of work with WHO, including support for WHO policies and programs, advice on matters relative to the osteopathic profession, and attendance at annual and other meetings.

There are **two distinct models of osteopathic education and practice** and, in some cases, the two models co-exist within the same country:

1. **Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (DO)** – Fully licensed physicians, practicing across all medical specialties in the US. Equivalent to a Medical Doctor (MD) with the difference that DOs receive *additional* education and training in osteopathic manual medicine that MDs do not.
2. **Non-physician Osteopath (D.O.** – representing “diploma in osteopathy”) Practice does not encompass surgery or the prescribing of pharmaceuticals, but rather focuses on manual osteopathic therapies. Osteopaths train and practice exclusively outside of the US; this model is favored in all Latin American nations with osteopathic practitioners, as well as Australia, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and several other European countries (e.g.

Switzerland, Denmark, France, Portugal, Iceland, Malta, Luxembourg, Finland, etc.), where osteopathy is regulated, distinct profession.

Osteopathy is a discrete clinical discipline independent of other manual medicine modalities, such as physiotherapy or chiropractic. Osteopathy is a whole person, patient-centered approach to health care that prioritizes scientific plausibility and evidence-based outcomes in patient treatment. Osteopathic education, professional and international associations, and the underlying philosophy of practice are unique.

The World Health Organization (WHO) published [Benchmarks for Training in Osteopathy](#) in 2011. It is important to note that, according to these Benchmarks, the practice of osteopathy is distinct from other healthcare professions that utilize manual techniques, such as physiotherapy or chiropractic, despite some overlap in the techniques and interventions employed.

The curricula for the full-time training programs of osteopaths, as well as curricula for conversion courses for practitioners with prior degrees are well established. The United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and other nations have accredited full-time university programs that grant Bachelor of Science and Master's degrees in Osteopathy. These graduates are registered primary contact clinicians diagnosing and treating using osteopathic manipulative treatment integrated with current medical knowledge and practice.

After degree completion, osteopathic practitioners in these nations register with a governmental ministry of health. Osteopaths are able to provide health care that is eligible for insurance reimbursement, and patients do not require a referral from another medical practitioner to consult an osteopath.

Government regulation, defined education standards, and accreditation of training institutions are important factors to ensure public safety. We encourage the Spanish Ministry of Health to adopt educational standards, registration procedures, and others practices that provide support to the osteopathic profession.

Attached please find a Global Report on Osteopathy and Osteopathic Medicine, written in collaboration with the WHO. We also welcome you to visit <https://oialliance.org/> for more information.

Thank you for your consideration of the above. Please feel free to contact us if any additional information from the OIA would be of use to you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "William S. Burke, DO, FACOPP". The signature is written in a cursive style with some capital letters.

Dr. William J. Burke, FACOPP
Chair