

The difference between an Osteopath and a Chiropractor

This is probably one of the most commonly asked questions in clinic and answering it from an osteopath's perspective is likely to be contentious in the eyes of a chiropractor and vice-versa. However, the general consensus from my view is that whilst they are similar in many respects, there are subtle differences between osteopathy and chiropractic approaches.

Similarities

- Both share a common history and philosophy which set them apart from the more traditional allopathic fields of medicine.
- The primary objectives of both osteopathy and chiropractic are most frequently the relief of aches and pains in the body.
- Both treat more than just bone joints and soft tissues.
- In diagnosing patients, osteopaths and chiropractors both use observation and touch.

Differences

- Osteopathy was founded in 1874 twenty one years before the chiropractic discipline.
- Chiropractors tend to focus mainly (but not exclusively) on the alignment of the spine as the primary means to relieve pain by preventing any compromise of the nervous system, whereas osteopaths look at the body as a whole and help improve its function by correcting the overall structure.
- Chiropractors use more diagnostic procedures such as X-rays, MRI scans, blood tests and urine tests, whereas osteopaths place more emphasis on physical examination, and will generally refer patients on for more diagnostic procedures if required.
- Osteopaths use a variety of techniques to influence the body's own innate healing system such as muscle and soft tissue work, joint articulation and manipulation, chiropractors use a number of techniques for the "adjustment" on the vertebrae, similar to osteopathic manipulation, to facilitate optimal nerve transition.
- Chiropractic appointments tend to be shorter (in most cases) as they primarily focus on adjustment techniques which are quicker to carry out. Chiropractors tend to see patients more frequently.
- Osteopaths spend more time with their patients per visit as their approach is broader and treatments tend to be spaced out over a longer period of time.

Of course, these are generalisations and all practitioners treat differently, some osteopaths may seem closer to the chiropractic way and some chiropractors may appear to treat more osteopathically but hopefully this will help to put across some of the main trends.

Adapted from, and thanks to: www.nicholascoysh-osteopath.co.uk/differences-between-osteopathy-and-chiropractic/