

What is Osteopathic Manipulation?

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The human body is a living machine which is supremely adaptable to changes within and around it. For example, if you shift your weight from two feet to one, a series of complex changes will occur within the muscular and bony systems of the body from head to foot to enable you to establish balance under the new circumstances.

A similar complex adaptation mechanism goes into operation in response to an injury. However, if the injury produced a local change which passed beyond the limit of spontaneous resolution, the various adaptations made in all other parts of the body structure persist as new demands are made upon this living mechanism.

In response to these numerous structural changes, changes in circulation and nerve impulses also occur which in turn produce areas of greater susceptibility to infection, or hypertrophy or degeneration. The whole range of these later changes makes up the diverse and complex array of human disease.

This is the osteopathic concept of disease- an effect, which is the climax to a whole series of changes in response to the various stresses of life superimposed on an original cause.

In the treatment of the patient - attention is given to the total patient and not just to this manifested effect. The osteopathic physician searches for these fundamental causes while he is also alleviating the local, presenting complaint. Through the use of his trained, perceptive, discriminating fingers he will search for, find, and endeavor to correct the fundamental causes thus producing a more enduring and complete change within the body which will permit a reversal of those adaptive changes and restoration of health. At the same time he may employ in addition any of the modern methods of treatment, medicinal or surgical, as indicated, to alleviate the local distress, but the need for these is reduced because of his attention to first causes.

The injuries sustained at birth ranging from the imperceptible which can only be detected by trained skillful fingers, to the gross which are immediately obvious to the naked eye may provide the first cause on which numerous adaptive effects are superimposed. A car accident in which a whiplash type of injury was sustained is another of these often obscure primary causes which through the years accumulates adaptive changes until the time comes when the accumulation of effects manifests as a gastric ulcer, a heart condition, an arthritis, a colitis, or any other named disease.

Numerous less well-defined complaints such as nervousness, fatigue, insomnia, indigestion, backache, headache, etc. may have persisted so long that they have been taken for granted. But when the structural disturbances produced by that original injury are corrected, the patient is surprised to find that those persistent, habitual complaints have gone.

These are but two examples of the influence of causes in the production of effects namely early injuries and second disease. Their number can be multiplied indefinitely by the multitude of diverse mishaps that occur to human beings and the unlimited range of combinations and variations which may accumulate as the body strives to adapt and accommodate to the stresses and needs of daily life. These effects may be further complicated by nutritional deficiencies, toxic influences such as smog, disinfectants, pesticides, drugs and so on, and by emotional and mental circumstances. Such factors as these must all be considered, by those primary causes need to be found and eliminated if a state of positive health rather than a mere absence of disease is to be achieved.

This is the purpose of osteopathic manipulation, namely the diagnosis and treatment of the structural and functional changes within the body by the trained, perceptive, discriminating skillful hands of the physician- the mechanic of the human machine.

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