

Treatment Results

Several studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of Osteopathic treatment for both acute and chronic pain, “acute” here meaning of less than 30 days, “chronic” meaning pain of 1-12 months duration, and “very chronic” of more than 1 year’s duration.

The results of Osteopathic treatment are broadly classified into 4 categories, based on the patient’s subjective reporting of their pain levels using a 0-10 scale, where 0=no pain and 10=the level they had when they first came for treatment.

Symptom Free	No pain whatsoever
Much Improved	60% - 90% improvement
Some Improvement	20 % - 50% improvement
No Change	0 – 10% improvement

ACUTE PAIN

A 1987 study (1) involving 138 Osteopathic patients with acute pain reported that 83% of these people were discharged after Osteopathic treatment either symptom-free or much improved following an average of 5.5 treatments. When the study broke down the percentages into “symptom-free” and “much improved” separately, it found that around 80% were discharged symptom-free. A further aspect of this study looked at patients who had previously received physiotherapy for their injury and reported 78% being discharged symptom-free or much improved following Osteopathic treatment.

A later study (2) of 138 ACC patients treated with Osteopathy for acute pain in 1991 reported that 93% were discharged symptom-free or much improved after an average of 5.5 treatments, and that 100% of those who had previously received physiotherapy for their injury were discharged symptom-free or much improved.

A further study (3) in 1991, involving a telephone follow up of 37 patients who had attended for a single visit and not returned for follow up, found that 70% of these “one-off” patients did not return because they had found the treatment “very effective” and had not returned because they “hadn’t needed to”.

CHRONIC PAIN

A 1987 study (1) involving the osteopathic treatment of 149 people with chronic pain (1-12 months duration) or very chronic pain (over 1 year's duration) found that 78% of the chronic cases and 67% of the very chronic cases were able to be discharged symptom-free or much improved after an average of 7.5 and 10.5 treatments respectively. Of these, approximately 50% were symptom-free.

Two follow up studies of this group of patients were conducted 2 years and 5 years later to determine whether these results were short-lived or long lasting for these chronic and very chronic cases. In the first study (after 2 years)(4), 59% of the chronic and 65% of the very chronic patients who had previously been discharged symptom-free or much improved following osteopathic treatment, had maintained that improvement over the following 2 years, and a further 20% had maintained their state of improvement for a good while or to a certain extent.

In the second follow up study (after 5 years)(5), 68% of the chronic and 67% of the very chronic patients had maintained that state of improvement for 5 years after being discharged symptom-free or much improved following Osteopathic treatment, and a further 15% were still much improved for some time but with recurrent episodes of pain from time to time.

References

1. Osteopathic treatment results for acute and chronic injuries, by C. Rowse and R.Carruthers, J.N.Z.R.O. 1987, 1:7-9.
2. Osteopathic Treatment Results for ACC Patients, by R.Carruthers, and Avril Gaastra, J.N.Z.R.O. 1991, 5:16-20.
3. Why Patients Attend For One-Off Visits, by R. Carruthers and Avril Gaastra, J.N.Z.R.O. 1991, 5:9-12.
4. A follow-up study of chronic ACC patients, by R.Carruthers, J.N.Z.R.O. 1988, 2:23-24.
5. 5 Year Follow-Up of Chronic ACC Patients, by R.Carruthers and Sue Ziolo, J.N.Z.R.O. 1991, 5:12-15.