



**Continuing
Professional
Development**
for Osteopaths

COMMUNICATION
AND CONSENT

Communication

What the *Osteopathic Practice Standards* says

A Communication and patient partnership

The therapeutic relationship between osteopath and patient is built on trust and confidence. Osteopaths must communicate effectively with patients in order to establish and maintain an ethical relationship.

STANDARD OF PROFICIENCY

STANDARDS

A1 You must have well-developed interpersonal communication skills and the ability to adapt communication strategies to suit the specific needs of a patient.

GUIDANCE

1. Your skills should include an ability to:
 - 1.1. Be sensitive to the range and forms of communication.
 - 1.2. Select effective forms of communication.
 - 1.3. Move between different forms of communication for individual patients.

Note also: A2-A6

CODE OF PRACTICE

STANDARDS

A2 Listen to patients and respect their concerns and preferences.

GUIDANCE

1. Poor communication is at the root of most complaints made by patients against osteopaths. Effective communication is a two-way process which involves not just talking but also listening.
2. You should be alert to patients' unspoken signals; for example, when a patient's body language or the tone of their voice may indicate that they are nervous or experiencing discomfort.
3. You should be aware of the fact that some patients will have specific needs in relation to gender, ethnicity, disability, culture, religion or belief, sexual orientation, lifestyle, age, social status or language. You should be able to respond appropriately to these needs.
4. Your patients should have your full attention, and you should allow sufficient time to deal properly with their needs. If you are in sole practice, you will need to develop strategies to minimise interruptions while you are with a patient.
5. Good communication is especially important when you have to examine or treat intimate areas. You should first ensure you explain to the patient clearly and carefully what you need to do and why you need to do it. The patient needs to understand the nature and purpose of the examination or treatment proposed. Intimate areas include the groin, pubis, perineum, breast and anus, but this is not an exhaustive list.
6. If you are proposing to undertake a vaginal or rectal examination or technique, you should offer to conduct the procedure at a subsequent appointment. Some patients may not have come prepared for such a procedure and may prefer to return at another time.

Note also: A1, A4, C5, C6, D4

STANDARDS

A5 Work in partnership with patients to find the best treatment for them.

GUIDANCE

1. You should encourage patients to ask questions about their treatment and to take an active part in the treatment plan and any decisions that need to be made.
2. The most appropriate treatment for patients will sometimes involve:
 - 2.1. Referring them to another osteopath or other healthcare professional.
 - 2.2. Providing advice on self-care.
 - 2.3. Not treating them at all.

Note also: A1, C1, C2, C5, D8

STANDARDS

A6 Support patients in caring for themselves to improve and maintain their own health.

GUIDANCE

1. Supporting patients in caring for themselves includes:
 - 1.1. Encouraging them to inform their General Practitioner (GP) and other healthcare practitioners that they are receiving osteopathic treatment and asking them whether you may communicate with their GP.
 - 1.2. Allowing them to make their own decisions about their care, even if you disagree with those decisions. However, you should explain their options for care and why you consider one option to be better than another, if that is the case.

Note also: A1, C1, C2, C3, C5