



General
Osteopathic
Council

Continuing
Professional
Development

Case-based discussion example



Grant Small is an osteopath. He works from home and has been treating 55-year old Dave Smith, for his low back pain. Grant has seen Dave five times, and his symptoms are improving significantly. At his last visit, Dave mentioned that his wife, Julie, had been getting neck and shoulder pain, and asked if Grant could treat this. Grant said that he may well be able to help, and Dave made an appointment for Julie for the following week.

Julie is a 53-year-old accountant. She exercises regularly doing two or three gym classes a week and is slim in build. She has been experiencing neck and shoulder girdle pain for four weeks, following a period of decorating at home. She has been able to carry on with her gym classes – in fact, they help - but the pain then returns when she is static. Her work involves several hours at the computer over four days a week.

Grant had assumed that as Dave had been coming to see him for a few weeks, that Julie would have an idea of what to expect from an osteopathic treatment. She seemed quite nervous, however, and looked surprised when Grant explained that he would ask her to undress to her underwear so that he could examine her. If she had been wearing trousers, he would have suggested that she keep these on, but she was wearing a dress. He asked if she was ok with this, and she said that it was fine. Grant left the room while she undressed, and gave her a couple of minutes before coming back in. She was laying face down on the treatment couch. Grant said that he needed to see her standing up first of all, so she got up, looking even more nervous. Grant stood behind her during the standing examination to assess her spinal mobility. He said that this was generally good, and commented that it was obvious that she did lots of exercise.

Grant offers Julie a towel to cover her when she lies down, which she accepts. He explains the treatment that he would propose, and the fact that she might feel a bit sore for a day or so afterwards. Julie says that she's happy to go ahead, and Grant treats her accordingly. Grant suggests a follow up session in a week's time, but Julie says that she'll need to check her diary and will call later. She doesn't call back.

When Grant next sees Dave, he asks how Julie is. He seems a little vague in answering but says that she felt quite sore after the treatment, to the extent that she hasn't been to any of her gym classes this week. He admits, also, that she was very embarrassed about getting undressed, and felt uncomfortable when Grant commented that she clearly did a lot of exercise. Dave hadn't mentioned to her about getting undressed, as he thought it might put her off, and he felt she would benefit from treatment as he had. Grant says that he'll give her a call to talk things through, but Dave says 'no – best leave it and she'll calm down', which makes Grant think that she's actually quite upset about this.

What has happened? What should Grant do? How could he have managed this case differently?