

RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

It's not just about bones

Professor Gregory Kolt and Ms Louise Adam from the School of Biomedical and Health Sciences have collaborated with Dr Louise Rowling from the University of Sydney to explore current curricula and accreditation standards in osteopathic courses in relation to mental health content and delivery, through funding from the NSW Osteopaths Registration Board. The project is made possible through funding from the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) National Action Plan on Mental Health initiative.

'Like other health workers, osteopaths may be called upon to make judgements about the mental health of their patients in order to make effective treatment decisions and referrals to mental health services' says Professor Kolt. 'While all registered health workers, including osteopaths, are required to have minimum competencies to enable them to contribute to appropriate care for people with, or at risk of, mental health issues, it is not clear whether the current curricula in the education and training of osteopaths is adequate to equip new graduates with sufficient skills to fulfil these requirements.'

In collaboration with the NSW Osteopaths Registration Board and various course providers, the research team conducted surveys and in-depth interviews with course providers to determine current mental health-related course content and clinical placement experience, and perceptions about the curricula on later osteopathic practice. A comprehensive review of documentation such as course outlines, curriculum plans and policy material was also undertaken to establish current levels of mental health-related content, and key similarities or



differences between different providers, and between osteopathy courses and similar clinical professions such as physiotherapy and chiropractic.

The results of this project will inform a possible revision of course content and accreditation standards for osteopathic pre-registration courses. In doing so, there is potential to benefit osteopathy patients directly by improving current osteopathic treatment practices and effective referral services from osteopaths to mental health practitioners.

Project Title: Mental Health Components in Tertiary Curricula for Osteopaths – a scoping study
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Contact Details: g.kolt@uws.edu.au,
http://www.uws.edu.au/biomedical_health_sciences
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