The difference between Chiropractic and Osteopathy

- Chiropractic and Osteopathy are very similar disciplines.
- In the UK both are statutorily regulated with their own Acts of Parliament and their own General Councils.
- There is therefore a huge overlap of both these disciplines with a large portion of their workload being very similar.

Diagnosis

- Chiropractors tend to use more diagnostic procedures, such as x-rays and MRI scans, blood and urine tests.
- Case history taking and orthopaedic examination are very similar for both professions and both use movement palpation (feeling the spine as it moves) to assist in diagnosing where there are abnormalities of movement.

Treatment

- Around 50% of patients consulting an Osteopath receive manipulation whereas about 90% of patients receive a similar treatment called an "adjustment" if they consult a Chiropractor.
- When a patient is manipulated or adjusted, the joint is moved just beyond its normal range of movement in an attempt to restore normal function. This obviously has to be done without spraining the joint and this is one of the many skills that Chiropractors and Osteopaths spend several years learning when training.
- Mobilisation, which consists of stretching the joint rhythmically within its normal range of movement, is used more by Osteopaths than Chiropractors.
- Both disciplines have similar methods of treating muscular, postural, cranial and paediatric problems, though the terminology used by each profession is different.

Regulators

General Chiropractic Council
44 Wicklow Street
London WC1X 9HL
Tel: 020 7713 5155
Email: enquiries@gcc-uk.org / Website: www.gcc-uk.org

The General Osteopathic Council
Osteopathy House,
176 Tower Bridge Road,
London, SE1 3LU
Telephone: 020 7357 6655 / Website: www.osteopathy.org.uk

Qualifications

Chiropractic is a statutorily self-regulated profession - that is, chiropractors, like doctors and dentists, must be registered with the government appointed regulator, the General Chiropractic Council (GCC). It is illegal to practise as a chiropractor without being registered with the GCC. In order to achieve registration, practitioners must graduate with either a Bachelors or Masters degree in Chiropractic and the names of the degrees may vary depending on the awarding University. Registration with the regulator means that the individual has a properly approved chiropractic qualification, current professional indemnity insurance and is subject to the GCC professional code of practice and standard of proficiency.

Osteopathy is a statutory self-regulated profession as above and it is an offence for anyone to describe himself or herself as an osteopath and practise as such, unless registered with the General Osteopathic Council. Training takes between four and five years. Osteopaths use the letters DO, or BSc (Hons)(Ost) or BSc (Ost) after their name.

Relevant Information

- BackCare Factsheets – Chiropractic, Osteopathy
- BackCare Booklets – Basic Back Care, Managing Back Pain, Active Back Care
- Other Publications – “Back & Neck Pain – the Facts” by Loic Burn

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