



American Academy of Osteopathy Position Paper on Osteopathic Touch

The osteopathic physician is well-trained to use palpation of the body as a component of diagnosis. This training includes the ethical considerations of the use of the hands in examination and treatment. Physicians may choose to utilize osteopathic manipulation as part of their treatments. Osteopathic care requires that the physician should foster open communication regarding palpatory diagnostic and/or treatment procedures.

WHEREAS, Osteopathic Manipulative Treatment is by definition and necessity a “hands-on” procedure which potentially involves the touching of personally and culturally sensitive areas including genitalia and body orifices; and

WHEREAS, osteopathic physicians must always be mindful and sensitive to the potential interpretation of touching as intrusive, sexual in nature and subordinating; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that members of the American Academy of Osteopathy be exemplary in the application of osteopathic manipulative treatment during all diagnostic and treatment procedures; and be it further

RESOLVED, that hands-on procedures involving culturally sensitive areas be explained to the patient, and that verbal or implied consent be obtained depending on the nature and location of the physical contact; and be it further

RESOLVED that interactions with patients and others in the professional setting be maintained at the highest level of ethical professional conduct; and be it further

RESOLVED, that no contact, verbal or physical, which could be interpreted as demeaning, demoralizing, exploitative, threatening or improper should occur.

*Adopted AAO Board of Trustees 3/25/1998
Revised AAO Board of Governors 3/22/2006
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(Footnote: The AAO extends these same standards to all members of the Academy with the practice of OMT and/or manual therapy.)