




Enhancing Osteopathic Care through Understanding the Drucebo Effect

Roberto Tedeschi*

Independent Researcher, Bologna, Italy

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Dear Editor,

I am writing to shed light on an emerging concept that holds profound implications for osteopathic medicine and patient care: the drucebo effect[1-3]. The drucebo effect goes beyond the placebo effect by involving active therapeutic interventions, emphasizing the interaction between these interventions and patient expectations to enhance their efficacy. While the placebo effect primarily concerns therapeutic outcomes arising from inactive treatments due to the patient's belief in the treatment's efficacy, the drucebo effect specifically involves the interaction between active therapeutic interventions and patient expectations. This concept is particularly relevant in manual medicine, such as osteopathy, where the hands-on nature and personalized approach can amplify patient expectations, thereby enhancing clinical outcomes. An illustrative example can be drawn from the management of patients with chronic neck pain. While a placebo effect might result solely from the belief in the treatment's success, the drucebo effect is activated when the osteopath combines targeted cervical mobilizations with clear communication of expected benefits. This dual approach

not only leverages the patient's positive expectations, but also enhances the neurophysiological response, leading to reduced pain perception and improved mobility.

Osteopathy, with its holistic framework, intrinsically shapes patient expectations by emphasizing a comprehensive, hands-on approach to care. This interaction not only builds trust, but also establishes a foundation where therapeutic interventions are amplified by the patient's belief in the treatment, potentiating the drucebo effect. Current evidence suggests that such mechanisms play a pivotal role in enhancing recovery outcomes, including reductions in pain and improvements in functional capacity.[4-7]. The hands-on, personalized nature of osteopathic treatment, combined with the osteopath's attention to the patient's physical, emotional, and psychological needs, sets a unique stage for the drucebo effect to manifest. This letter aims to discuss the potential of consciously integrating expectation management into osteopathic practice to enhance treatment efficacy and patient satisfaction [8].

Osteopathic philosophy is founded on the idea that

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*Corresponding Author: Roberto Tedeschi

Department of Biomedical and Neuromotor Sciences, Alma Mater Studiorum, University of Bologna, Bologna, Italy

Email: roberto.tedeschi2@unibo.it

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the body possesses an innate capacity for self-healing, recognizing the central role of the musculoskeletal system in overall health. When this perspective is effectively communicated to patients, it can not only positively shape their expectations, but also enhance the therapeutic efficacy of manual interventions through a drucebo mechanism, which goes beyond the simple placebo response, due to the synergistic interaction between patient expectations and osteopathic manipulations. Current evidence from related healthcare fields suggests that patient beliefs and expectations about treatment can significantly impact their experience of pain, functional recovery, and quality of life. This evidence underscores the need for osteopaths to recognize and harness the power of the drucebo effect within their practice [9,10]. In manual medicine, consciously managing patient expectations can enhance the benefits of the treatment, multiplying both the physiological and psychological effects of the intervention.

To optimize the potential benefits of the drucebo effect in manual medicine, osteopathic practitioners can implement practical strategies such as:

- 1- Establishing a strong therapeutic alliance through open, empathetic communication, thereby setting a positive expectation for treatment.
- 2- Educating patients about the osteopathic approach and its holistic benefits, reinforcing the body's natural healing capabilities.
- 3- Collaborating with patients to set realistic, achievable goals for treatment, aligning expectations with therapeutic possibilities.
- 4- Conducting pre-treatment sessions to discuss the patient's previous experiences and expectations, creating an informed baseline for intervention.
- 5- Using evidence-based language to convey treatment efficacy, which has been shown to reinforce patient confidence and improve adherence to the therapeutic plan.
- 6- Leveraging structured follow-ups to evaluate and recalibrate patient expectations in real time, maintaining alignment with clinical progress.

The implications of the drucebo effect for osteopathy extend beyond individual patient encounters. They suggest a paradigm shift in how we conceptualize and implement osteopathic treatment. By integrating expectation management into clinical practice, osteopaths have an opportunity to further personalize care, enhancing the intrinsic therapeutic potential of osteopathic treatment.

In conclusion, as healthcare continues to evolve to-

wards more integrative approaches, further research into the drucebo effect in manual medicine is essential to offer even more effective and personalized treatments, understanding and leveraging the drucebo effect within osteopathy can lead to more effective treatments and improved patient outcomes. I advocate for increased research into this area and a greater emphasis on expectation management in osteopathic education and practice.

Conflict of Interests

None.

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