1 Introduction

Recent research has described osteopathy as a healthcare profession that is underpinned by biopsychosocial and holistic principles, and that focuses on the health and mobility of all tissues of the body. Osteopathic healthcare includes a thorough primary care assessment and the application of a range of manual therapies and health promotion strategies (including exercise advice and prescription, lifestyle advice and education) tailored to the individual, that aim to optimise function and health.

This document describes the typical services that Australian osteopaths provide their patients, reflective of their university education and continuing areas of professional development, and the pricing principles supporting these services. This document is of use to practising osteopaths, private health insurers, government funding bodies and other stakeholder groups.

Please note that Osteopathy Australia does not dictate how an osteopath may implement these service descriptors in their clinical practice and acknowledges that they may be superseded by other factors such as regulation, government policy and legislation.

2 Type of activity

The activity descriptors below broadly describe the range of services provided by osteopaths. As part of a service, an osteopath may use a variety of techniques appropriate to the client’s condition. Osteopaths are trained to provide interventions such as manual therapy, exercise/activity prescription, cognitive/behavioral techniques, advice about home care and ancillary services.

Activities are charged to reflect the time usually required to provide the service x the practitioner’s usual hourly rate x any loadings (which are indicated below) + any additional costs unless otherwise specified.

Services may be provided by an osteopath or an osteopathic assistant providing care as part of the management plan under the supervision of an osteopath. Where assistants are used, the osteopath is responsible for evaluation, design, quality control and review of the patient’s management.

3 Initial Consultation

3.1 Initial consultation services

An initial consultation by an osteopath may include:

- History taking
- Goal setting
- Discussion and obtainment of patient consent
- Onward referral (if appropriate)
- Physical assessment
- Management plan development
- Treatment/ intervention (where indicated)
- Diagnosis
- Contemporaneous notes
- Communication with referrers (as appropriate)
- Patient education
3.2 Initial Consultation – standard

A standard consultation involves the evaluation of one presenting complaint and screening for general health and physical function. A presenting complaint includes compensatory changes and referred pain.

3.3 Initial consultation – two distinct problems

A consultation under this category requires the evaluation of two distinct presenting complaints in addition to screening the person’s general health and physical function. A presenting complaint is considered distinct from another when treatment of each complaint requires distinct treatment plans.

The cost of an initial consultation – two distinct problems should be 1.5 times the standard initial consultation.

3.4 Initial consultation – complex presentations or multiple problems

It is anticipated that this category of consultation would rarely be used. A complex consultation involves multifactorial presentations where the person’s condition requires extended contact time due to the need for multifactorial care including manual, activity and education interventions as might be required in some complex chronic problems or because the person requires care of more than two distinct presenting complaints.

It is recommended that the cost of an initial consultation for complex or multiple problems should be 1.5 times the standard initial consultation. Prior approval from the client or payer should be obtained before providing this service.

Total cost loading should be limited to 200% of standard fee for factors such as complexity, out of hours working, or service location. This excludes travelling time, facility fees incurred etc.

4 Follow up Consultation

4.1 Follow up consultation – standard

A follow up consultation by an osteopath is an activity which includes:

- History taking, or review of history taken in the initial consultation
- Reassessment
- Clinical recording
- Intervention/ treatment
- Review of management plan/patient education
4.2 Follow up consultation – complex

Follow-up consultations may involve continuation of treatment for conditions in two distinct areas, or more complex presentations. The same multipliers recommended for initial consultations should be applied to the base rate for follow-up consultations. Prior approval from the client or payer should be obtained before providing complex services.

5 Other services

5.1 Health promotion and screening

Health promotion activities are aimed at injury prevention, education about pain and injury management or the maintenance of a healthy lifestyle. Screening services may include the design and/or implementation of assessment protocols for government, employment, third party pre-employment and screening for disease and lifestyle factors related to health promotion and disease prevention.

5.2 Case conference

A case conference may occur between two or more health professionals and a patient, or with other interested parties involved in the care of the patient. Additional persons may attend (for example a carer or case worker). A minimum time of 15 minutes should be applied.

5.3 Tele-consultation

A clinical discussion between the osteopath and the patient can occur via telephone, internet or other communications device that progresses the treatment program, where a face to face consultation is either not practicable or warranted. The consultation content will be recorded in the clinical record as for a regular face-to-face consultation.

5.4 Discharge planning

Discharge planning describes focuses on referring the patient to another service provider (including a written summary of the management undertaken, outcomes achieved, and recommendations for future management) or providing a written plan for the patient for ongoing self-management.

5.5 Review

A review describes a reassessment and re-evaluation activity which tracks progress of a course of management. Reviews may occur on the conclusion of a course of treatment / management or part way through a protracted course of treatment / management. A review may include generation of a brief report to other providers involved in the patient’s care (including a written summary of the treatment / management undertaken, outcomes achieved, and recommendations for the future).

5.6 Report writing

Report writing is billed as a separate activity when the report is generated in response to a request by a referral source or third party such as an insurer or solicitor. The report is provided in written format.
5.7 Group based intervention

A shared supervision intervention occurs when a patient receives an intervention as part of their treatment plan in a setting where the supervision is shared by a small number of other patients with each patient receiving one on one instruction for at least 20% of the total session time. An example of which might be a small group of patients undertaking tailored rehabilitation programs. Maximum class size is limited to 5 patients.

5.8 Class intervention

A class intervention occurs when a common intervention is delivered to more than one patient at the same time. Examples are exercise classes, ante/post-natal classes and pain management or falls prevention groups. The fee per person is calculated by dividing the hourly rate by the average number of people attending a class.

5.9 Manual handling/ work based ergonomic assessment and advice

Manual handling training and work based ergonomic assessments are provided to prevent injury or aid recovery after an injury. These services may be delivered on a one-to-one basis, in group settings or workplace environments.

5.10 Equipment supply

Equipment supply describes the prescription, customisation and supply of aids, appliances and equipment. The cost of the aid/appliance/equipment would be the additional minimum charged. The degree of mark up over cost of purchasing an item is a commercial decision.

6 Time and location allowances

6.1 Non-attendance

Non-attendance occurs when a patient does not present for a scheduled service without providing reasonable notification. The recommended non-attendance charge is the usual fee for the service that was scheduled.

6.2 Patient environment assessment – service location

Patient environment assessment describes an activity which reviews the environment in which the patient is required to function, where that environment has an impact or presumed effect on the management plan for the patient. Patient environments include the person’s home or workplace. If the service location is other than at the osteopath’s usual practice location, a loading of 1.25 is recommended in addition to a cost for travel (see the section on travel for further information).

6.3 After hours services

In some types of osteopathic service, services may be given after the normal hours of service. A multiplying factor of 1.25 is recommended for a service provided outside the osteopath’s usual hours of service. It is recommended that prior approval be gained to ensure the patient / third party payer is aware of the additional fee prior to making the appointment.
6.4 Travel

Travel may be charged when the most appropriate clinical management of the patient requires the service provider to travel away from their usual place of work. Travel is charged at the practitioner’s usual hourly rate or a rate negotiated with a third party funder / patient.

*Examples are:* travel to the patient’s home or place of work, hospital, pool, exercise or sporting facility, school, meeting venue or residential care facility.

6.5 Facility fee

A facility fee applies where a provider incurs a fee from the site at which clinical management occurs (e.g. pool, gymnasium). The facility fee is determined by the osteopath and added at end of the fee calculation. Total fee for activities conducted in a separate facility is calculated using the following formula:

\[(\text{Activity } \times \text{ time}) + \text{Location fee}\]

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References