



RESEARCH REPORT

Adapting and feasibility testing pre-registration e-learning resources for Professionalism in Osteopathy in the UK



Fiona Browne^{a,*}, Kerstin Rolfe^{b,c}, Alan Currie^{a,d},
Tim Walker^{a,e}, Sue Roff^{a,e}

^a General Osteopathic Council, Osteopathy House, 176 Tower Bridge Road, London SE1 3LU, UK

^b British College of Osteopathic Medicine, Lief House, 120 – 122 Finchley Road, London NW3 5HR, UK

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Abstract *Background:* The UK General Osteopathic Council (GOsC) has statutory duties of 'promoting high standards of education and training in osteopathy and keeping the provision of that training under review'. Students graduating from osteopathic educational institutions (OEs) must meet the GOsC *Osteopathic Practice Standards*.¹

Objectives: One domain within the *Osteopathic Practice Standards* is 'professionalism'. Supporting guidance requires explicit teaching and learning opportunities about 'professionalism' in osteopathy. Our objectives are to establish the feasibility of adapting e-learning resources used widely in medical education to meet these requirements. *Methods:* A consensus group of two senior faculty representatives nominated by their Deans or Principals from each of the 11 UK OEs and senior officers from the GOsC, with expertise in standards, reviewed and adapted the items of the two Dundee Polyprofessionalism resources used to explore professionalism in medical education. Four additional items were added. The agreed inventory was tested on two groups of 4 and 12 osteopathy students.

Results: The adaptation and feasibility of 34 items for Professionalism in Osteopathy 1 (Academic) and the 45 items for Professionalism in Osteopathy 2 (Clinical) were agreed to explore professionalism in osteopathy.

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +44 020 7357 6655x239.

E-mail address: fbrowne@osteopathy.org.uk (F. Browne).

^c Tel.: +44 020 7435 6464.

^d Tel.: +44 020 7357 6655x251.

^e Tel.: +44 020 7357 6655x239.

Conclusions: The Professionalism in Osteopathy e-learning resources will be field tested to explore their potential to guide learning and to track and help to benchmark the learning curve in pre-registration osteopathic professionalism.

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Implications for practice

- Professionalism resources can support teaching and learning of professional behaviours. Students can recognise that their views about lapses in professionalism may be different to others. Students may adapt their own views following discussion with others.
- Field testing data sets could provide the opportunity for comparison of views between cohorts, educational institutions, faculty health professionals and patients. Over time, data sets may be able to track and therefore help to benchmark the learning curve in pre-registration osteopathic professionalism in UK OEIs supporting regulators and other institutions and groups to target support and guidance appropriately.
- Discussing different views about lapses in professionalism could have future implications for appropriate CPD in the future – perhaps drawing on feedback from others.

Introduction

The approximately 4900 registered osteopaths in the UK are regulated by the General Osteopathic Council (GOsC). Training to be an osteopath usually takes four years full-time or five years part-time. There are approximately 800 undergraduate students enrolled in the 11 osteopathic educational institutions (OEIs) awarding qualifications recognised by the GOsC.

In 2011, the GOsC published the *Osteopathic Practice Standards*¹ the standards which all UK osteopaths meet for registration. The *Osteopathic Practice Standards* identify 'professionalism' as one of the four key domains of osteopathic practice focussing osteopathic practice on more than simply knowledge and skills. Professionalism is a key aspect of the delivery of healthcare to meet patient and public expectations.² In 2012, the GOsC published *Student Fitness to Practise: Guidance for Osteopathic Educational Institutions*³ and *Student Fitness to Practise Guidance about Professional Behaviours and Fitness to Practise for*

*Osteopathic Students*⁴ which state that all OEIs are expected to have published information about the importance of professional behaviours, how these are taught and how learning opportunities are facilitated throughout the course. However, there are few resources in osteopathy to do this.

A literature review shows that work is emerging in the field of medical education about the roles of situational judgement scenarios and e-learning in identifying gaps in professional behaviours through responses to particular scenarios. If identified effectively, such gaps could indicate where additional regulatory guidance could support more professional behaviour and could also support the teaching and learning of professional behaviours.^{5,6} Indeed, data generated could support the identification of dissonant views regarding lapses of professionalism between groups of students, teachers and others which could support regulators and others involved in osteopathic education to take appropriate action to support the teaching and learning of professional behaviours.⁶

While the research literature on learning, teaching and assessing professionalism among health professionals has proliferated in the last decade, there have been relatively few attempts to develop and validate resources that can meet Gliatto and Stern's challenge that 'Delineating the behaviours and contexts that define professionalism can facilitate a staged, level-appropriate curriculum' (p.263) in undergraduate programmes.⁷ The GOsC is working to develop such resources with the 11 UK OEIs to support these aims.

This paper reports the process of determining the feasibility for two online resources customised for osteopathy. The resources are based on the *Dundee Polyprofessionalism* online resources, which have been developed and tested in the context of undergraduate medical education and which collect responses of students and their faculty to lapses of professionalism.⁸

Aims

The GOsC publication *Student Fitness to Practise: Guidance for Osteopathic Educational Institutions* notes that 'Fitness to practise issues may arise

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