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THE ROLE OF OSTEOPATHY IN SUPPORTING PATIENTS WITH DEMENTIA: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH TO IMPROVING QUALITY OF LIFE

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Introduction

Dementia is a progressive neurodegenerative syndrome characterized by a decline in cognitive function, behavioral changes, and a decrease in quality of life. As the global burden of dementia rises, there is growing interest in complementary approaches—particularly osteopathy—as supportive care aimed at enhancing functional well-being.

Aim of the Study

To evaluate the impact of osteopathic techniques on quality of life, anxiety levels, motor function, and overall clinical condition in patients with mild to moderate dementia within an interdisciplinary therapeutic setting.

Materials and Methods

A review of literature from PubMed, Scopus, and Google Scholar (2013–2024) was conducted, along with clinical observation of 28 patients aged 65–82 diagnosed with mild or moderate dementia (Alzheimer's type or vascular dementia).

Osteopathic treatment included:

- * Craniosacral therapy (to improve venous and cerebrospinal fluid outflow)
- * Autonomic nervous system regulation techniques
- * Cervical and upper thoracic spine mobilization (to enhance cerebral perfusion)
- * Fascial release and desensitization techniques (to reduce agitation and somatic tension)

Therapy was delivered once a week for 8 weeks. Assessment tools: MMSE, GDS, PSQI, and WHOQOL-OLD.

Results

After 8 weeks, 82% of patients demonstrated:

- * Reduced anxiety and motor agitation (GDS –7%, $p < 0.05$)
- * Improved sleep quality (PSQI improved by 2.5 points)
- * Decreased somatic symptoms (headache, neck/shoulder pain)
- * Improved emotional state and fewer episodes of confusion
- * Stabilized cognitive status (MMSE scores maintained or improved)

Participants reported better adaptation to daily activities and enhanced emotional connection with family members.

Conclusion

Osteopathy represents a safe and valuable adjunctive therapy in the interdisciplinary management of dementia. It contributes to reducing anxiety, improving sleep, and stabilizing cognitive and emotional states. While these findings are promising, further randomized controlled trials (RCTs) are necessary to verify the underlying mechanisms of osteopathic interventions in neurodegenerative conditions.

Keywords:

Dementia, Osteopathy, Cognitive Decline, Craniosacral Therapy, Functional Rehabilitation, Quality of Life, Geriatric Care

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