

# Media Release

## Allied healthcare key to managing chronic pain

- One in four Australians are living with chronic musculoskeletal conditions, such as back problems and arthritis
- Arthritis is the second-most common long-term condition affecting over two million people
- New research finds one in five people believe arthritis can only be treated with medication
- This Pain Awareness Week (25 - 31 July), Osteopathy Australia is encouraging Australians to learn more about the options available to manage pain relating to musculoskeletal conditions

**EMBARGO: 25 JULY 2022** – New research reveals one in six Australians (16%) live with chronic pain every day and almost one in five Aussies (17%) admit their pain would have to be so bad that they were unable to move before seeking the help of a health professional.

President of Osteopathy Australia, Dr Michelle Funder, says "Our 2022 Australian Analysis of Attitudes to Pain and Pain Management shows people still hold a number of misconceptions when it comes to pain and pain management."

"Often, people aren't aware of the options available to them, and are waiting too long before seeking the help of a healthcare professional by which time their pain has become chronic. We want to bust the many myths relating to pain and musculoskeletal conditions, such as arthritis," she says.

According to the ABS, one in four Australians (27%) are living with chronic musculoskeletal conditions, such as back problems and arthritis<sup>1</sup>. Interestingly, the results from the latest 2021 Australian Census found arthritis to be the second-most reported long-term condition<sup>2</sup>.

It's a common misconception by Aussies that they must 'learn to live with their pain'. However, there are several ways allied health professionals, such as osteopaths, may be able to manage pain and medication is not the only answer.

"Our research shows one in five people (20%) believe arthritis can only be treated with medication. Although there is no cure for arthritis, osteopathy may help to reduce pain, ease swelling and improve mobility and range of joint movement. Early diagnosis and improving a person's lifestyle are key to preventing further degeneration, and to help them perform daily activities more easily."

"For conditions such as arthritis, another myth is that moving is bad for you. Pain relief techniques, such as manual therapy, and lifestyle management, such as exercise, can actually improve the quality of life for people with arthritis, helping to reduce pain and stiffness, and get people back to doing the things they love," says Dr Funder.

Although the rates of arthritis increase with age, yet another myth is that arthritis only affects older people, but experts know the condition can affect people of any age.

When Aussie mum of four, Tamara was hospitalised in her late 20s with headaches, vomiting and a tingling down her arm, she received a life-changing diagnosis when doctors found a bone spur growing into her spinal cord as a result of osteoarthritis.

“It took three years to find a surgeon willing to perform surgery because I needed a disk replacement, and the risk was extremely high,” Tamara says. “The saddest part was when the doctors advised me against having any more children because of my condition.”

“While I was waiting for my surgery, I continued my regular osteopathic treatment and I’m walking today because of those treatments, plus I went on to have another beautiful baby who is now six years old!

“I still get lots of different symptoms, which I manage with osteopathy. My osteopath also provides clinical pilates, a self-guided exercise and strengthening program and collaboration with a remedial masseur. I work full time and I’m a busy mum with four children. My quality of life is only as good as it is because of my osteopath,” she says.

Osteopaths are university-qualified allied health professionals who take the time to listen and treat patients as a whole, not just focussing on one pain point. Osteopathy involves the clinical care of the neuro-musculoskeletal system, which is made up of the bones, muscles, nerves, and other tissues that support the body and control its movements. Osteopathic treatment involves manual therapy to aid mobility and relieve pain.

This Pain Awareness Week (25 - 31 July), Osteopathy Australia is encouraging Australians experiencing chronic pain relating to musculoskeletal conditions, such as arthritis, to seek professional help to manage their pain and discomfort. For more information and to find an osteopath, visit [www.whatisosteo.com](http://www.whatisosteo.com).

### **About Osteopathy Australia**

Osteopathy Australia is the national peak body representing the interests of osteopaths, osteopathy as a profession and consumer’s right to access osteopathic services. Osteopathy Australia is a member of Allied Health Professions Australia (AHPA) and the Osteopathic International Alliance (OIA).

### **About the Research & Citations**

2022 Australian Analysis of Attitudes to Pain and Pain Management: The research by Osteopathy Australia was carried out on a national representative sample of 1,008 Australians aged 18 and over in March 2022. Methodology: The data sample was weighted against ABS data for age, gender and location using an online survey that is independently conducted and verified by PureProfile.

1. ABS (2022a) [Health conditions prevalence](#), ABS website, accessed 21 March 2022.
2. <https://www.abs.gov.au/media-centre/media-releases/2021-census-data-over-8-million-australians-have-long-term-health-condition>