

Keeping going, why osteopaths of retiring age still practice – a qualitative study

Hamilton F.^{1*}, Ponto M.²

London School of Osteopathy, England

FHSCE, Kingston University & St George's University of London, England

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Osteopathy is a manual healthcare practice which has its roots in alternative and complementary medicine. The last thirty years have seen significant political, educational and professional developments in osteopathy in the UK. Against this changing landscape, perhaps it is not surprising that only 8% of the profession are over 60. However to take Antonovsky's salutogenic approach, the question is not so much why most osteopaths retire, but why some do not.

Purpose: To explore the perceptions and experiences of a group of osteopaths who remain in practice past state retirement age.

Materials and methods: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven mature osteopaths. An interpretive phenomenological approach was used to analyse the data. A brief validated personality questionnaire was also completed to derive trait characteristics of the group.

Results: Four themes emerged, with *Finance* and *Health* represented thus supporting existing literature. *Career* as a theme was strongly evident, with sub-themes of autonomy, generativity, helping others, success, relationships and regulation also apparent. The last theme *Self*, incorporated identity, interests, personal relationships and perceptions of work and retirement. Personality profiles were in line with those expected of contented employees and longevity, but at odds with the osteopathic profession as a whole.

Conclusion: Making sense of 'not retiring' is completely coherent for mature osteopaths who enjoy career satisfaction, good health, and high self-esteem. Whilst, for the most part, they have financial and social 'buffers' to cope with retirement, it is their choice to remain in work, beyond the retirement age.

Key words: Osteopathy; professional practice; work; career; longevity; retirement.
