

# Hands-on osteopathic treatment cuts hospital stays for pneumonia patients

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Older patients battling pneumonia spent less time in the hospital when treated using osteopathic manipulative medicine - a drug-free form of hands-on medical care focusing on increasing muscle motion - in addition to conventional care, recently published research shows.

Kari Hortos, a Michigan State University professor in the College of Osteopathic Medicine's Department of Internal Medicine, was one of seven site investigators as part of the five-state Multicenter Osteopathic Pneumonia Study in the Elderly.

The study revealed patients being treated additionally with osteopathic manipulative medicine stayed in the hospital one day less compared to patients receiving conventional care only.

"The results suggest a role for osteopathic manipulative medicine to support conventional therapy in the treatment of [pneumonia](#), which is the fourth most common hospital diagnosis in the country," Hortos said. "Besides the obvious benefit of getting people home quicker, the cost savings could be enormous. Further study is needed with these treatments."

The randomized, controlled clinical trial worked with seven hospitals to assess the impact of osteopathic manipulative treatment in patients 50 and older. The study, done between March 2004 and February 2007, was recently published in the journal *Osteopathic Medicine and Primary Care*.

In addition to the reduced length of hospital stay, manipulative medicine also showed a slight decrease in both the amount of intravenous antibiotics needed and [respiratory failure](#), according to the study findings.

Osteopathic manipulative treatments have been used throughout the United States since the late 1800s. The techniques can be used to alleviate pain, restore range of motion and enhance the immune system.

Another form of treatment called light touch - a light form of massage - also was used as a comparative group in the MOPSE study; while patients receiving it did respond favorably, the results were not as significant as for those receiving osteopathic treatments in addition to conventional care.

Hortos said the fact even light-touch treatments showed some benefit emphasizes the possible role human touch may play in helping patients heal.

"Human contact, both from a physical and emotional aspect, seems to help patients heal faster," she said.

The MOPSE study was funded by a group of foundations led by a \$1.5 million grant from the Osteopathic Heritage Foundation and the Foundation for Osteopathic Health Services. To read the full article on the study, go to [www.om-pc.com/content/pdf/1750-4732-4-2.pdf](http://www.om-pc.com/content/pdf/1750-4732-4-2.pdf) .

The study involvement of the MSU College of Osteopathic Medicine also was notable because of the coordination with the college's Statewide Campus System, which is made up of 31 member hospitals providing postdoctoral training to graduates, Hortos said. Lori Dillard, a professor at the college's Macomb County campus, was the lead specialist and worked with Mt. Clemens Regional Medical Center as part of the

MOPSE study. Hortos also serves as associate dean of the college's Macomb County campus.

"The coordination with Mt. Clemens Regional Medical Center is a great example of how the college can work with the Statewide Campus System to recruit patients for community-based research," Hortos said. "The college has the structure in place to conduct both site-specific and general research in an efficient manner."

Provided by Michigan State University

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