

Use of a SOAP Note Assignment to Evaluate Osteopathic Medical Students Understanding of the Somatic Dysfunction Diagnostic Process

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Introduction/Background:

Prior studies in osteopathic medical education have looked at student interest in OMT and SOAP note writing in general, but none have specifically evaluated student integration of somatic dysfunction assessment from screening to full segmental diagnosis. Seo et al¹ used the SOAP note to evaluate student documentation completeness.

The Alabama College of Osteopathic Medicine (ACOM) instituted an OMT SOAP note assignment to assess documentation completeness in OMS3s.

Objective:

We hypothesize that OMS3s fail to complete a segmental examination prior to making a SD diagnose and performing OMT (after finding TART changes on the OSE).

Methods:

OMS3 OMT SOAP notes from the ACOM 2022 class were retrospectively reviewed for the rate and type of OSE, segmental exam and OMT performed. This data is compared to SOAP note completeness data published in Seo et al¹.

Results:

55 SOAP notes demonstrated that 31 (56.3%) used OMT based solely on OSE findings, while only 9 (16.3%) completed a segmental exam for an accurate SD diagnosis prior to OMT. This is consistent with Seo et al¹ demonstrating incomplete student documentation.

Discussion/Conclusion:

Our analysis confirms the observation that OMS3s diagnose and treat SD based only on the OSE or do not document completely. This provides a reference point for focused OMS3 and faculty instruction on the OSE and the segmental exam prior to assigning a SD diagnosis. However, this study only assessed student documentation on a known OMT documentation assignment thus limiting its generalizability to all patient care encounters. The use of the SOAP note assessment tool on randomly selected patient encounters would allow us to assess the OMS3s understanding and use of OMT in future daily practice.