

Dr. D.O. Right says . . .

## Manipulative treatment can help children

by J. Scott Heatherington, D.O.

Many people think of osteopathic manipulative treatment (OMT) only being indicated in adults. However, this is definitely not the case. Children and even newborn infants frequently have symptoms which respond dramatically to OMT.

Let me illustrate. A newborn infant who, reportedly, was frequently screaming (not just crying) following discharge to his home was brought in to be examined. Upon examination of the child, we found some unusual tension of the neck muscles, particularly near the base of the skull, and also in feeling of the head of the child, there was a definite tenseness or firmness to the feel. Further examination revealed that there had been some jamming of the cranial bones in one area of the skull, probably during labor or the delivery. This occurs frequently in deliveries, however, usually these mild restrictions of the cranial bones will release spontaneously without any assistance.

The infant's head and neck were treated with osteopathic manipulation - a very gentle type of treatment which releases the tension that is resulting in the restricted motion and allows a normal motion, which is present in the cranium of both infants and adults, to be resumed. When treatment was completed, the infant seemed to be somewhat more relaxed and the tense feeling in the neck and skull were definitely lessened.

On a subsequent visit, the examination revealed that there was normal motion of the cranial bones, and there was only very minor tension present in the neck area. We treated this area once again. The child did not require further treatment.

Problems such as the one described above are not common, and yet they are not rare. They are more apt to be present following deliveries which have prolonged labors, or in cases where forceps have been

required. Symptoms can vary from those in which the child screams to symptoms related to the gastrointestinal tract where the infant will vomit frequently. In infants who are in the age group from six months to two years, symptoms may include poor sleeping habits, poor eating habits, or poor mobility, either in crawling or walking. Another symptom that is sometimes present is that of a child who will frequently, intentionally bump his head against the end of the crib or a wall. This usually is a very definite sign that there is some dysfunction involving the cranium. These and other symptoms frequently will respond well to osteopathic manipulative treatment, particularly to treatment of the cranium.

Not all osteopathic physicians treat the cranium because it does require some special training over and above that which is usually required in an osteopathic medical school. This type of manipulative treatment is also found to be of value in treating infants and children with Downs Syndrome, hyperactivity and many other nervous system problems.

Indications for the use of OMT in other areas of the body, of course, are frequently present in children, as they are in adults. Examples are children who have had traumatic injuries to their back, or who may have a stiff neck, or lame foot or leg; all of these problems may be the result of some mild trauma, and they usually will respond readily to osteopathic manipulative treatment.

Children usually respond exceptionally well to osteopathic manipulative treatment when there is some dysfunction of the musculoskeletal system, which is preventing the other systems of the body from functioning normally. The reason behind this is that all of the various body systems, of which there are seven major ones, are inter-related and inter-dependent upon one another. It is easy for us to understand how, if the respiratory system is not functioning properly, it can affect our ability to inhale enough oxygen in order for the other parts of our body to function normally. Also, if our digestive system is not functioning properly, and we are unable to retain food, we will soon become weak due to malnutrition. If our nervous system or our circulatory system are not functioning normally, they can affect all of the other parts of the body.

Likewise, if the musculoskeletal system, which is comprised of the bones, the muscles, ligaments, and the joints of the body, is not functioning as it should, it has an effect on the other body systems. Treatment of the musculoskeletal system with OMT can improve its function and also have a secondary improving effect on the other body systems.

