



# The First Palpation

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Potsdam, Germany

29-30,9,2011



# Introduction

○ The first palpation is like the first kiss:

“If it is good, it will be remembered forever”



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# Definition

- The first palpation is the first touch by a new student, on the first day.
- These students, who I like to refer to as 'osteopathic virgins', know little about osteopathy and even less about osteopathic palpation.
- This is a great opportunity to introduce them to an important osteopathic tool in a fun and creative way.



# Objective

- This way of teaching palpation confirms to us that under the right circumstance one can teach anybody this palpatory skill
- This palpation is pure and without artifice, for it is an innate skill



# Preparation for the palpation

- The student sits upright, but not rigid
- Feet flat on the floor
- He/she sits symmetrically on the ischial tuberosities
- Spine, head and neck straight
- Release the area between the pubis and coccyx(perineum): breathe into this area



# Preparation for the palpation

- Relaxation will spread from the perineum to the lower extremities
- Then it will go cranially and release the diaphragm
- The student will feel like a relaxed horse: those who have horses and have brushed them, know what I mean





# Preparation for the palpation

- Before touching the patient, the student:
  - Will be present to this moment: it is helpful to practice mindfulness
  - “feel your body, head and brain symmetrical and as a unity”
  - “before touching the patient ask permission (non verbal), to enter in contact with the patient”



# Preparation for the palpation

- The student places the patient's hand between his/hers and waits to receive the message from the body
- There should be no action or intent by the student , just receptivity
- The student should be relaxed, present and receptive



# Dialogue with the tissues

- What ever message comes from the patient's tissues to your hand, acknowledge it, even if its new to you, even strange or bizarre
- Do not censure the sensation
- What ever the student feels it is through their own perception- don't tell them what to feel



# Dialogue with the tissues

- ◊ Ask the student to be receptive
- ◊ Not actively engaging, but be present
- ◊ Not to censure themselves
- ◊ Have an attitude of “anything is possible”
- ◊ Be free in receiving the message of the tissues
- ◊ Don't focus, but center yourself



# Dialogue with the tissues

- Don't make an effort , let it happen
- There is no right or wrong – whatever they feel is right
- Trust their palpation, have confidence in themselves
- Acknowledge and accept what they feel



# Palpation exercises

- The students switch roles
- I ask the students not to share their findings with their partner so as not to influence them
- This process can take from 5-10minutes per person
- Afterwards, I ask the students to list off what they felt in their hands



# Students' palpatory experiences

- ◊ Warmth
- ◊ A wave
- ◊ Pulling in one direction
- ◊ An expanding balloon
- ◊ air
- ◊ Ripples
- ◊ Electricity
- ◊ A charge
- ◊ Feeling of melting with the patient



# Conclusion

- There are many ways to teach osteopathic palpation
- There are many palpatory categories
- This is fine palpation, a form of dialogue with tissues
- It is better to let the student discover the sensory experience of this palpation rather than directing what they should feel
- Directed palpation has its place , but it could also stunt the student's unique perception
- By allowing the student the freedom to palpate we allow exploration, creativity and include unique experiences which could be illuminating for us and the profession



# Conclusion

- It is good to go back to this palpation every so often, even every day, especially when there are 'chattering monkeys' in our head and we are palpating too actively
- This "first palpation" brings us back to the innate, pure and sweet sensation that can often give us new information about the patient and the treatment of the patient.