

Prevalence and Profile of New Zealand Osteopaths Treating People Experiencing Headaches and Migraines

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INTRODUCTION

Headache disorders are an important cause of pain and disability and substantially affect quality of life. Osteopaths are primary health care practitioners who primarily manage musculoskeletal conditions including headaches and migraines in their practice. However, there is a lack of data concerning the profile of Aotearoa/New Zealand (NZ) osteopaths treating these conditions.

OBJECTIVES

The objective of the study was to describe the profile of NZ osteopaths treating people experiencing headaches and migraines.

METHODOLOGY

The Osteopathy Research Connect-NZ (ORC-NZ), a practice-based research network (PBRN) for the NZ osteopathy profession was established and recruitment occurred between August to December 2018.

The questionnaire delved into patient management with participants indicating the frequency of treating headaches and migraines; the frequency of using specific techniques and adjunctive therapies.

The outcome variable for this study was treating patients with migraines or headaches.

RESULTS

A total of 277 osteopaths completed the ORC-NZ questionnaire, representing 48.7% of the profession at the time of data collection.

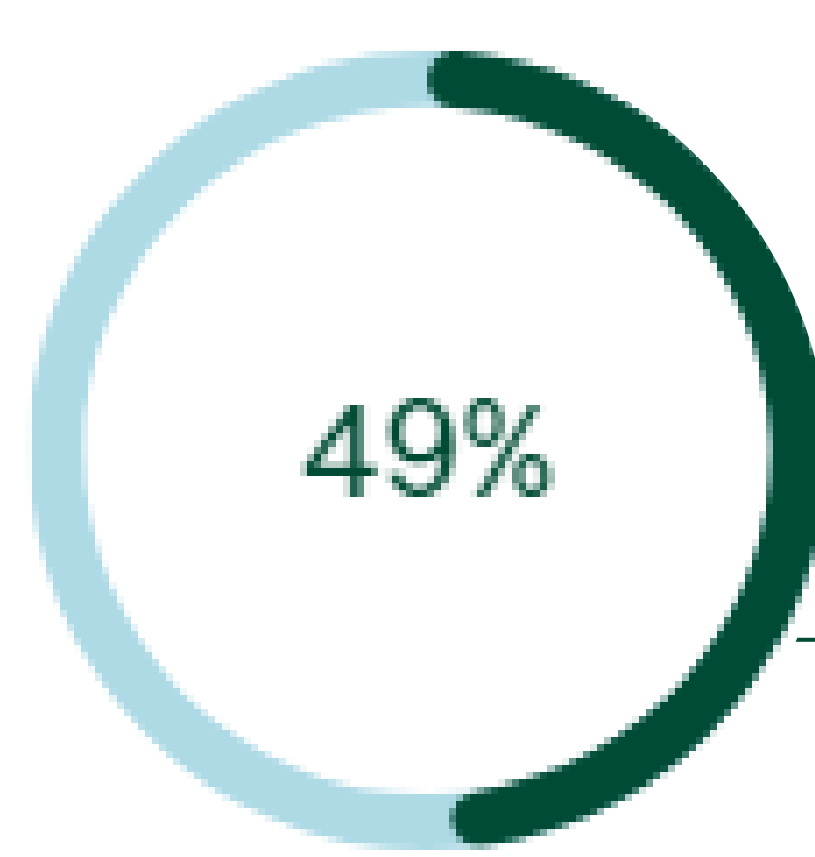
- NZ osteopaths using high-velocity, low-amplitude, are likely to treat the temporomandibular joint (TMJ) in the case of migraine, and the thoracic spine for patients with headache.
- Osteopaths may use diagnostic imaging often as an assessment tool.
- NZ osteopaths who reported 'often' treating patients with migraines and headaches were more likely to report clinically supervising associates and be co-located with a general practitioner.



New Zealand/ Aotearoa Osteopaths



Treatment of Headaches and Migraines



Response Rate for the Survey

RELATED LITERATURE

Stovner LJ, Nichols E, Steiner TJ, Abd-Allah F, Abdelatim A, Al-Raddadi RM, et al. Global, regional, and national burden of migraine and tension-type headache, 1990–2016: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2016. *Lancet Neurol* 2018;17:954–76. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1474-4422\(18\)30322-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1474-4422(18)30322-3).

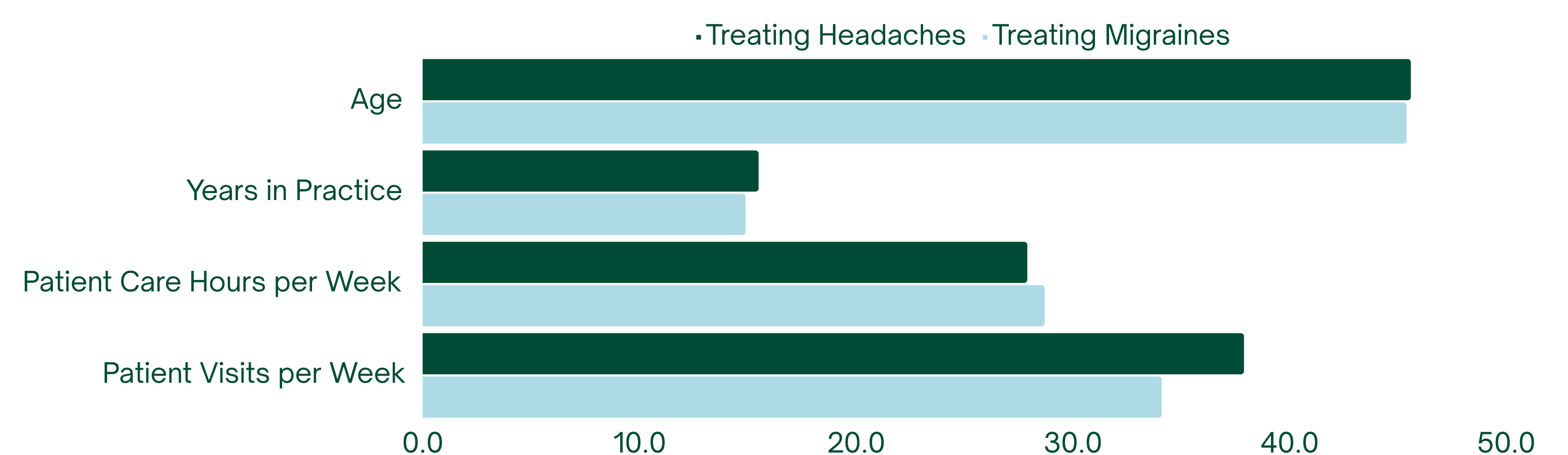
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Abu Bakar N, Tanprawate S, Lamburu G, Torkamani M, Jahanshahi M, Matharu MS. Quality of life in primary headache disorders: A review. *Cephalgia* 2016;36:67–91. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0333102415580099>.

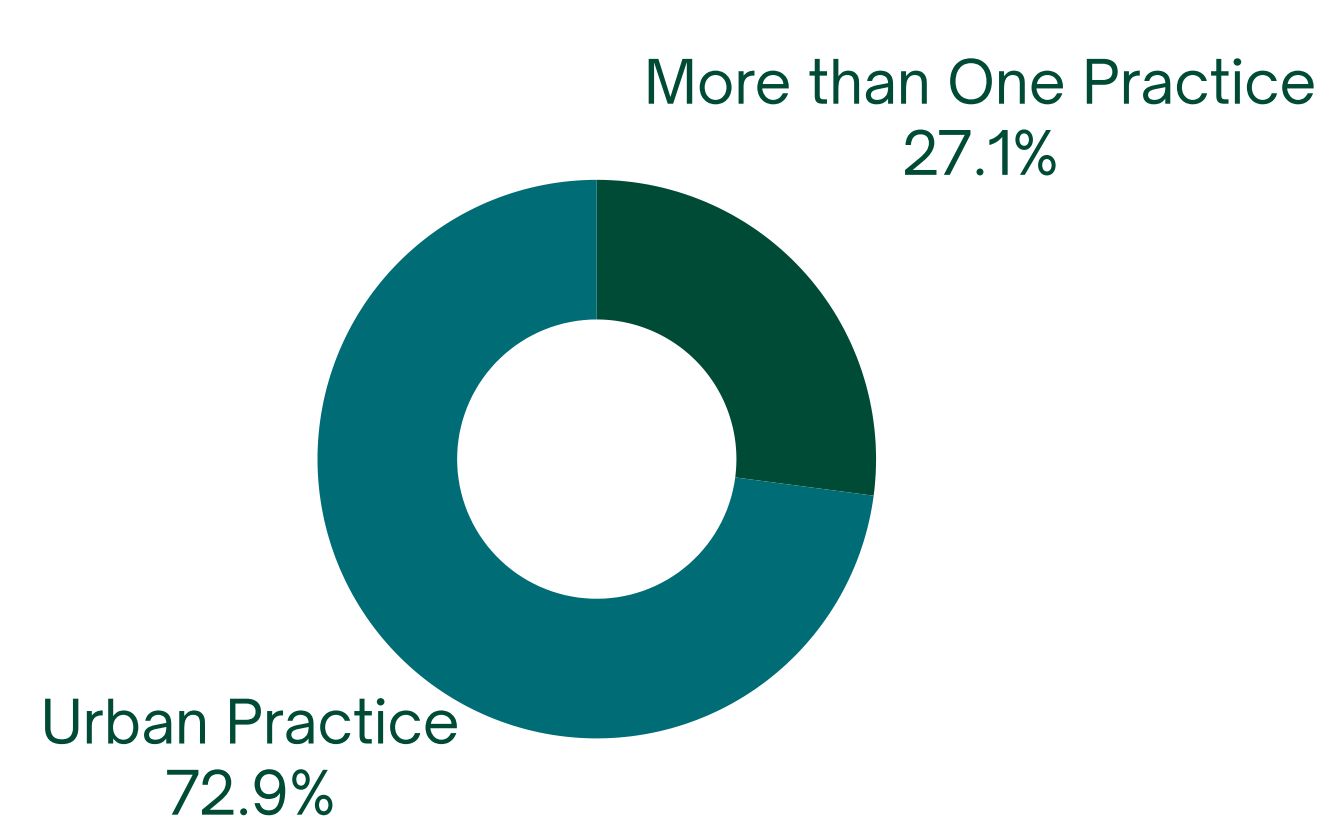
Olesen J. Headache Classification Committee of the International Headache Society (IHS) The International Classification of Headache Disorders, 3rd edition. *Cephalgia* 2018;38:1–211. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0333102417738202>.

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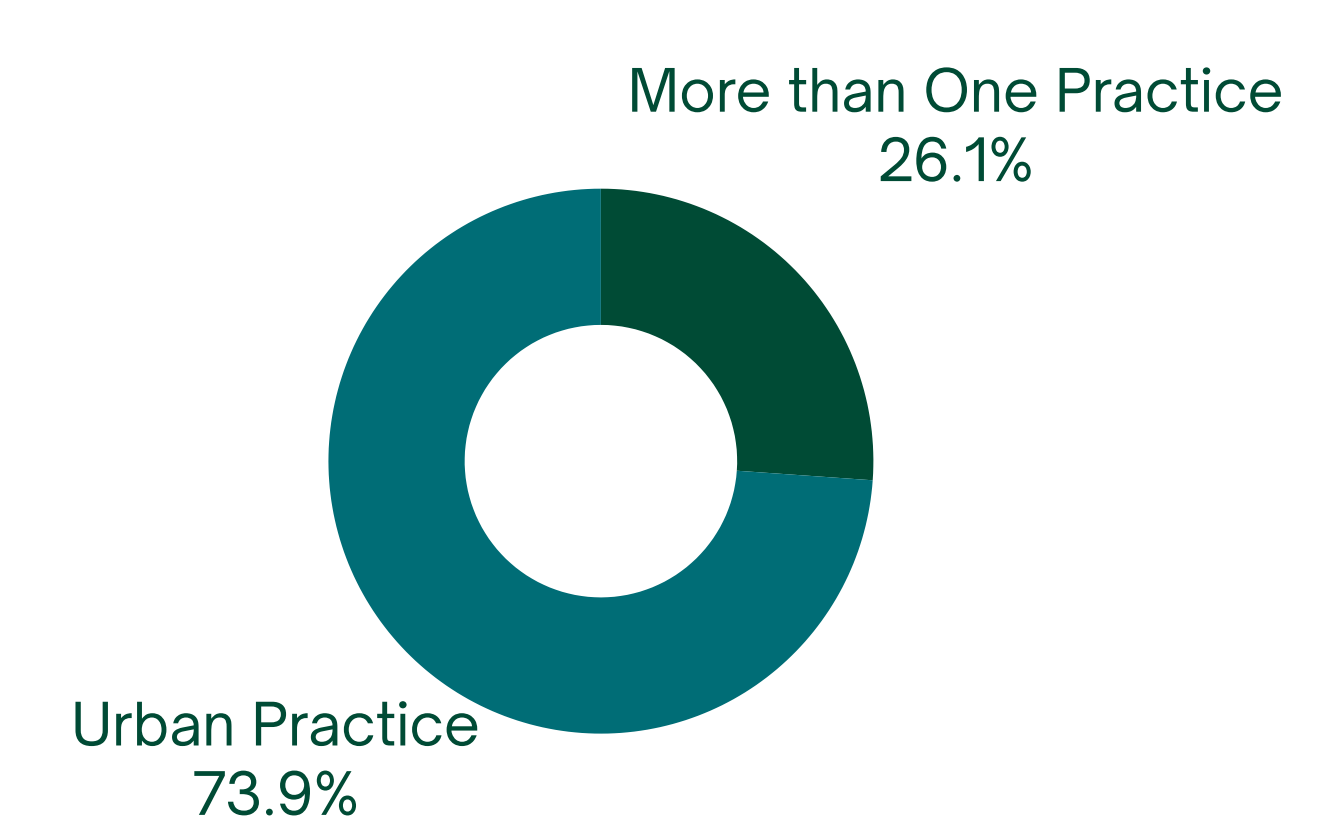
DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF NEW ZEALAND OSTEOAPTHS WHO REPORT 'OFTEN' TREATING MIGRAINES AND HEADACHES



LOCATION PROFILE OF OSTEOAPTHS TREATING HEADACHES



LOCATION PROFILE OF OSTEOAPTHS TREATING MIGRAINES



DISCUSSION

The application of manual therapy to other biomechanically-related areas of the body is an approach commonly used by osteopaths.

It may be NZ osteopaths who report often treating headache disorders are also treating the thoracic spine as part of their management.

How NZ osteopaths are using diagnostic imaging in their clinical reasoning and management of migraines requires further exploration to understand if their approach is consistent with the best practice for migraine care.

Osteopathic care for the TMJ and its influence on migraine outcomes could present avenues for future research

LIMITATIONS

Cross-sectional surveys are susceptible to recall and social desirability biases and these may impact on the results.

The strong association observed between often treating both conditions (headaches and migraines) may suggest that respondents did not differentiate between these complaints.

CONCLUSION

A substantial proportion of NZ osteopaths appear to treat patients with headaches and migraines frequently.

However, robust research exploring the clinical reasoning and multi-modal management approach adopted by NZ osteopaths is required to further validate our survey findings.