

Evidence Brief: Osteopathy

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Produced by the Knowledge Management team Evidence Briefs offer an overview of the published reports, research, and evidence on a workforce-related topic.

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Key publications – the big picture

[NHS Long Term Workforce Plan](#)

NHS England, 2023 (updated 2024)

(No direct mention of osteopaths, but the Institute of Osteopathy contributed to the LTWP.)

Increase AHP training places to 17,000 by 2028/29, putting us on the path to increasing places overall by a quarter to more than 18,800 by 2031/32. (Page 19) With full implementation over the longer term, the NHS total workforce would grow by around 2.6–2.9% a year, with an expansion of the NHS permanent workforce from 1.4 million in 2021/22 to 2.2–2.3 million in 2036/37, including an extra 60,000–74,000 doctors, 170,000–190,000 nurses, 71,000–76,000 allied health professionals (AHPs), and 210,000–240,000 support workers alongside the expansion of new roles such as 22 | NHS Long Term Workforce Plan physician associates and nursing associates, and greater use of apprenticeships. (Page 21) Education and training places for the AHP workforce are estimated to need to grow by 19–25% by 2030/31. This Plan sets out an ambition to increase AHP training places by 25% to over 18,800 by 2031/32. To support this level of ambition and work towards this level of expansion, AHP training places will increase by 13% to 17,000 by 2028/29, with an increase of 8% by 2024/25. (Page 45) More than a third of AHPs could train through apprenticeships, compared to 6% now, but this would vary by professional group. The Plan sets out the following assessment for proportion of entrants joining the AHP workforce via an apprenticeship route by 2031/32. (Page 45)

[Revised standards of conduct, performance and ethics](#)

Health & Care Professions Council, 2024

The revised standards of conduct, performance and ethics came into effect on 1 September 2024. Our [guidance on social media](#), which sits alongside the standards, has also been revised.

[Approved programmes](#)

Health & Care Professions Council, 2024

A database of approved education programmes for Allied Health Professionals.

[Recruitment of overseas allied health professionals](#)

NHS Employers, 2024

How overseas allied health professionals (AHPs) can enter the UK for work.

[Innovation and collaboration: supporting Allied Health Professions Return to Practice](#)

NHS England, 2023

It is well recognised that there are significant challenges in AHP workforce supply, retention, and growth across all sectors of health and care. Returning Allied Health Professions are a vital element of the Health Education England (HEE) workforce plan and are essential in re-directing knowledge, skills and experience back into health and care sectors.

[AHP Educator Career Framework](#)

Council of Deans of Health, 2023

The AHP Educator Career Framework is an outcomebased career framework that describes the knowledge, skills and behaviours required to be an effective teacher, learning facilitator, supervisor and role model in AHP education in practice and formal education settings. First and foremost, it promotes the education pillar of AHP professional practice, recognising that education is everyone's responsibility.

[Genomics for allied health professionals: Survey results](#)

NHS England WT&E, Genomics Education Programme, 2023

Overall, your responses showed that a good majority of you feel you don't have a good understanding of genomics.

[Your future allied health professionals](#)

NHS Employers, 2023

This infographic sets out the different routes available for organisations to train allied health professionals.

[A guide to ESR coding for Advanced Practitioner roles](#)

NHS England WT&E, 2022

To ensure that advanced practitioners' skills are consistently recognised, and better enable those skills to be deployed across healthcare settings we must now ensure that the NHS workforce accurately reflects the breadth of the modern clinical workforce.

[The Allied Health Professions \(AHP\) for England: 2022 to 2027](#)

NHS England, 2022

This strategy is a catalyst for change. Wherever you work, every member of our AHP community has a part in realising our collective ambitions through its delivery. I therefore encourage you to take a moment to consider how the AHP community can enable the change required to deliver future care today.

[Allied Health Professions' Research and Innovation Strategy for England](#)

NHS England WT&E, 2022

This Strategy comprises a definitive collective national reference statement that encompasses and supports the existing research and innovation strategies of all the Allied Health professional associations.

[What can AHPs offer in mental health settings?](#)

Health Education England, 2021

AHPs are the key to transforming health, care, and wellbeing. Working at the top of their competencies and skills, AHPs lead mental health teams to new ways of working. Their expertise in

rehabilitation and enablement is vital to move away from over-reliance on hospitals and towards professional interventions across health and social care settings.

[My role in tackling health inequalities: a framework for allied health professionals](#)

The King's Fund, 2021

This framework builds on our commitments in the UK allied health professions public health strategic framework 2019–2024 (Allied Health Professions Federation 2019) and we hope AHPs across the UK will find it useful. It aims to help you to consider your own unique contribution to tackling health inequalities and to help maximise this through a series of lenses and questions.

[What is advanced clinical practice?](#)

NHS England WT&E, no date (estimated post-2020)

Advanced clinical practitioners come from a range of professional backgrounds such as nursing, pharmacy, paramedics and occupational therapy. They are healthcare professionals educated to Master's level and have developed the skills and knowledge to allow them to take on expanded roles and scope of practice caring for patients.

[Standards of education and training](#)

Health & Care Professions Council, 2017

In line with the way our education quality assurance model functions, we have split our standards of education and training along institution and programme levels.

See also: [Review of the standards of education and training \(2024\)](#)

Institute of Osteopathy

[Quick guide to osteopathy as a workforce supply solution](#)

Institute of Osteopathy and Health Education England, 2022

This quick guide is designed to support the clinical leads, workforce leads, operational managers and any senior leaders who are involved in workforce development in NHS provider departments to understand the value that osteopaths can bring to productive NHS services and facilitate best use of the multi-professional workforce.

General Osteopathic Council

[New Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging framework published](#)

General Osteopathic Council, 2024

The General Osteopathic Council (GOsC)'s new framework is critical to the successful delivery of its Strategy, through to 2030. Our Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDIB) framework builds on the progress we've made following the publication of our previous and very first framework for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in 2021.

[Graduate Outcomes and Standards for Education and Training](#)

General Osteopathic Council, no date

The Graduate Outcomes are designed to help students demonstrate that they meet the Osteopathic Practice Standards before they graduate and are able to register with us.

The outcomes have been mapped to the four themes of the [Osteopathic Practice Standards](#), covering:

- A: Communication and patient partnership
- B: Knowledge, skills and performance
- C: Safety and quality in practice

- D: Professionalism

Case Studies

[Communication strategies in psychologically informed osteopathic practice: A case report](#) Abstract only*

International Journal of Osteopathic Medicine 47, 2023

This paper presents qualitative data from communication between an osteopath and patient participating in a research study to develop a new psychologically informed pain management course.

The Star for workforce redesign

More resources and tools are available in the AHP Quick Reference Guides Upskilling section of the [Star](#). Alternatively, search for 'Allied Health' in the search bar.

Statistics

You can find relevant statistics on the [Health and Care Statistics Landscape](#).

[Institute of Osteopathy Professional Census 2024](#)

Institute of Osteopathy, 2024

The iO professional census is a national survey conducted by the iO every three years for the last decade. It is designed to gather insight regarding current osteopathic practice, identify new opportunities and inform professional transformation that will ensure Osteopathy remains a growing, thriving profession.

National Data Programme

Workforce, Training and Education staff can look at the [WT&E Data and Analytics Service](#) resources including the National Data Warehouse SharePoint site to find out more about datasets and Tableau products.

Published Peer Reviewed Research

Community, Primary Care, Social Care

[Osteopathic health care in aged care facilities: The experience of practitioners in an emerging practice setting](#)

Australasian Journal on Ageing 43(4), 2024

Eight interviews were conducted during January 2023. Thematic analysis identified common experiences between participants. These included positive aspects of aged care, perceived challenges of working in aged care, exposure to age-specific conditions, benefits of working in multidisciplinary teams and perceived gaps in university education curricula in relation to geriatric populations.

Digital

[A Retrospective Study of Virtual Hospital Experiential Learning Across Clerkship and Pre-clerkship Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine Students at a Medical School Based in the United States](#) Full text available with NHS OpenAthens account*

Cureus 16(10), 2024

Regardless of the place along the undergraduate medical education continuum, students reported perceived confidence and skill growth following VHEL sessions.

[Digital health technologies for osteopaths and allied healthcare service providers: A scoping review](#)

International Journal of Osteopathic Medicine 41, 2021

The results of this review indicate that telehealth technology effectively monitors and progresses patient care, while mobile health applications provide remote support and enable data collection.

Diversity and inclusion

[Overcoming barriers to equality, diversity, inclusivity, and sense of belonging in healthcare education: the Underrepresented Groups' Experiences in Osteopathic Training \(UrGEnT\) mixed methods study](#)

BMC Medical Education 24, 2024

Our findings confirm conclusions from other institutions that staff education is urgently needed to create and maintain equitable, inclusive environments in osteopathic educational institutions in the UK to support all students, particularly those from underrepresented groups. Institutional EDI processes and policies also need to be clarified or modified to ensure their usefulness, accessibility, and implementation.

["Raising the curtain on the equality theatre": a study of recruitment to first healthcare job post-qualification in the UK National Health Service](#)

Human Resources for Health 20, 2022

The Healthcare Workforce Equity + Diversity Lens we have developed can help to 'raise the curtain on the equality theatre' and inform more inclusive approaches to recruitment such as contextualised recruitment or effective allyship between employers and universities.

[Osteopathic ableism: A critical disability view of traditional osteopathic theory in modern practice](#)

Abstract only*
International Journal of Osteopathic Medicine 42, 2021
Osteopathy is a health profession regulated by statute in the UK and osteopaths regularly encounter patients from a wide range of backgrounds including people with disabilities. Disabled people are underrepresented in UK osteopathy, both as patients and practitioners. We explore some of the traditional discourses of osteopathic practice and discuss the potential harms of applying these concepts to practice.

[Empathy as related to gender, age, race and ethnicity, academic background and career interest: A nationwide study of osteopathic medical students in the United States](#)

Medical Education 54(6), 2020
Special features of this study (eg, nationwide representative samples, use of a validated instrument for measuring empathy in patient care, statistical control for the effect of 'good impression' response bias, and consistency of findings in different samples from multiple institutions) provide more definitive answers to the issue of correlates of empathy in medical students and increase our confidence in the validity, reliability and generalisability of the results.

[The challenge of diversity in the allied health professionals](#)

Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust, 2020
Although the Allied Health Professions (AHPs) are a diverse range of professions in terms of their skill set. The workforce which makes up the professions lacks diversity.

Education and curriculum

[Pseudoscience: A skeleton in osteopathy's closet?](#)

Abstract only*
International Journal of Osteopathic Medicine 52, 2024
Implications

- Pseudoscience is information presented as scientific, but on closer examination fails to meet established standards to be considered as science.
- Pseudoscience has harmful effects on individual patient care and society more broadly.
- There are historical, professional and sociological factors which make osteopathy susceptible to pseudoscience.
- These factors may facilitate the propagation of pseudoscientific claims by osteopaths.
- The incorporation of pseudoscience into osteopathy's knowledge base, threatens the claimed legitimacy and credibility of the profession.
- It is important that osteopaths are aware of pseudoscience and recognise when it might be presented as scientific knowledge.

[A modern way to teach and practice manual therapy](#)

Chiropractic & Manual Therapies 32, 2024
Manual therapy interventions should include both passive and active, person-empowering interventions such as exercise, education, and lifestyle adaptations. These should be delivered in a contextualised healing environment with a well-developed person-practitioner therapeutic alliance. Teaching manual therapy should follow this model.

[Improving learning experience through implementing standardized team-based learning process in undergraduate medical education](#)

BMC Medical Education 24, 2024
While osteopathic medical students value teamwork in UME and professional development, their perception of TBL can be less than positive if not conducted deliberately. Assessment of the implementation of the standard TBL steps and components and development of corresponding targeted interventions may improve the TBL experience of medical students. Our process

could be generalized to help educators interested in improving TBL in their home institutes.

[Evaluating the impact of a curriculum intervention using an assessment rubric for communication skill development of osteopathy students](#) Abstract only*

International Journal of Osteopathic Medicine 47, 2023

Despite using an explicit assessment rubric, insufficiently contextualised and integrated curriculum appears to disrupt student learning, whilst a spiralled, scaffolded curriculum delivered at an appropriate level in combination with explicit assessment rubrics work well together to support deeper learning and development.

[Does the student-led osteopathy clinical learning environment prepare students for practice?](#)

BMC Medical Education 22, 2022

Clinical educators perceived that the student-led osteopathy clinical learning environment develops pre-professional learners to meet some, but not all, of the capabilities for professional practice as an osteopath.

[A qualitative study exploring experiences and challenges of combining clinical academic training with family life](#)

BMC Medical Education 21, 2021

Although people manage to find ways to successfully combine clinical academic roles with family life, findings highlight a need to identify ways of supporting and encouraging trainees with caring responsibilities to ensure that they remain on the clinical academic pathway.

[Evaluating a specialist education programme for nurses and allied health professionals working in older people care: A qualitative analysis of motivations and impact](#)

Nurse Education Today 97, 2020

Understanding the motivations to undertake a specialist gerontological programme and the impacts on practitioners and older people care and services will help inform the continuing professional development agenda for nurses and allied health professionals working in this field of practice.

Leadership, coaching and supervision

[Inequitable barriers and opportunities for leadership and professional development, identified by early-career to mid-career allied health professionals](#) Full text available with NHS

OpenAthens account*

BMJ Leader 8(3), 2024

Thematic analysis (TA) generated four themes, including the barriers and opportunities for AHP leadership development and career progression. Further TA identified three overarching themes: equitable and interprofessional leadership development; an equitable and structured AHP career pathway; and having AHP leaders at a strategical and/or very senior level. These overarching themes were subsumed under the umbrella category: equity of opportunity and voice. The AHPs, who were interviewed, reported inequitable access to both career and leadership development, compared with other professions, such as nurses, doctors and pharmacists.

[Professional diversity in leadership – Inclusion of the smaller professions](#)

Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust, 2022

There are 14 Allied Health Professions (AHPs) in England with approximately 170,000 AHPs working within the NHS.

Physiotherapists represent the largest group of AHPs with approximately 61,000 registered with the Health and Care Professions Council, whilst Prosthetics and Orthotics represent the smallest profession with approximately 1000 registrants.

[Preparing osteopathy graduates for future careers: A review of osteopathic education in Australia](#)

Focus on Health Professional Education: A Multi-Professional Journal 23(1), 2022

Content analysis and expert panel discussions identified the curricula has a strong focus on critical thinking, communication and problem solving and less focus on teamwork, leadership, initiative and enterprise and technological skills.

[Mentors' experiences in an osteopathic medical student research program](#)

Journal of Osteopathic Medicine 121(4), 2021

Mentors were motivated to participate in the voluntary research program for both altruistic and professional reasons. Since most mentors reported being satisfied with the program, it is likely they would participate in future mentored research programs. Our results suggest that mentors viewed this voluntary research program as mutually beneficial.

[Who Coaches the Coaches? The Development of a Coaching Model for Experiential Learning](#)

Innovative Higher Education 46, 2021

We recommend practices for coaching that can support gains for students and faculty in experiential, project-based, interdisciplinary courses.

[Capitalising on the transformational opportunities of early clinical academic career training for nurses, midwives and allied health professionals](#)

BMC Medical Education 20, 2020

Stakeholders need to recognise that a cultural shift about the purposes of research training from a transactional to transformative approaches is required to facilitate the development of NMAHPS clinical academics, to enable them to contribute to innovative health and patient care.

Role progression and development

[Professional Development and Scholarly Activity Weeks to Enhance the Master Adaptive Learner and Foster Future Educators](#)

Medical Science Educator 34, 2024

One osteopathic medical school designated 4 weeks per year in the first-year curriculum to Professional Development and Scholarly Activity. The aim of these weeks is to foster the development of Master Adaptive Learners. This metacognitive learning theory promotes adaptive expertise which supports students as educators in a variety of settings.

[Building Interprofessional Competencies Through a Collaborative Prescribing Activity With Osteopathic, Pharmacy, and Physician Assistant Students](#)

MedEdPORTAL, 2024

The virtual format allowed multiple institutions to participate from various locations. It broadened the learners' experience by fostering interaction among those with varied perspectives and allowed collaboration between locations and programs that otherwise could not have participated. The activity introduced students to virtual collaboration and key telehealth skills, enhancing their confidence and familiarity with virtual interactions in a professional setting.

[Part I: examining the broken history of manual therapy across professions. A survey-based analysis](#)

The Journal of Manual & Manipulative Therapy, 2024

Thematic elements identified a shift for respondents from their initial education to a more nuanced understanding of the history over time, and an appreciation that there is not one profession that owns or developed manual therapy. Practice limitations were identified, as 19% of respondents reported limitations due

to inaccurate historical understanding. This study highlights a lack of historical knowledge and its potential benefits for practice, education, regulation and interprofessional relations if recaptured.

[Part II: Beyond Broken Histories: Reframing Professional Identity and the Historical Genesis of Manual Therapy. Interviews across professions](#)

The Journal of Manual & Manipulative Therapy, 2024

Support for a common genesis in Northern Europe was present within physiotherapists, but for all other professions North America was primary. Multiple themes and quotes of significance were developed from the study, including the importance of history within professional identity. An archetypal analysis was completed to answer specific assumptions related to the historical genesis of manual therapy including points of genesis for manual therapy and scientific necessity within manual therapy.

[Osteopathic Manipulative Medicine and Disorders: An Overview of Peer-Reviewed Publications 2018–2022](#)

Cureus 16(6), 2024

Our comprehensive analysis showed that there has been a significant increase in peer-reviewed OMM publications in recent years, led by the United States osteopathic physician-scientists and European osteopathic scientists. OMM was found effective in treating not only common conditions such as pneumonia, low back pain, and musculoskeletal disorders, but also disorders such as inflammation, dizziness, headache, anxiety, and neonate/preterm infant disorders.

[Professional identity in osteopathy: A scoping review of peer-reviewed primary osteopathic research](#)

International Journal of Osteopathic Medicine 45, 2022

This review aimed to examine primary osteopathic research to advance understanding of OPI. Thematic analysis resulted in five domains, each illustrating osteopathic traits and debates, cohesion and conflict at individual and collective level.

[When worlds collide: Experiences of physiotherapists, chiropractors, and osteopaths working together](#) Abstract only*

Musculoskeletal Science and Practice 60, 2022

The findings from this study suggest that physiotherapists, chiropractors and osteopaths that work together in the same clinic may collaborate while simultaneously navigating blurred professional lines. These results suggest that working together in the same clinic is a meaningful form of contact, which in turn allows for collaborative practices that may reduce intergroup tension between professions.

[An international profile of the practice of osteopaths: A systematic review of surveys](#)

International Journal of Osteopathic Medicine 40, 2021

Implications for practice

- To provide a profile of osteopathic practitioners and their patients.
- To describe osteopathic practice characteristics, treatment and care by country.
- To gain an understanding of the scope of osteopathic practice across different geographical regions.
- To evaluate the comparisons and differences in how osteopath's practice in different geographical regions.

[Relationship between labour force satisfaction, wages and retention within the UK National Health Service: a systematic review of the literature](#)

BMJ Open 10, 2020

Pay was found to influence satisfaction, which in turn affected retention. An increase in wages alone is unlikely to be sufficient to ameliorate the concerns of NHS workers.

[Developing a consolidated research framework for clinical allied health professionals practising in the UK](#)

BMC Health Services Research 20, 2020

The consolidated framework was entitled 'Shaping Better Practice Through Research: A Practitioner Framework' by stakeholders, thus emphasising its ambition to embed research activity into practice.

Secondary and tertiary care

[Improving the Format, Content, and Writing Process of Outpatient Clinic Letters Within a Musculoskeletal Therapy Department](#)

Abstract only*

The Joint Commission Journal on Quality and Patient Safety 49(12), 2023

Overall, patients and therapists found the clinic letters an important and meaningful part of care. However, therapists reported that they often did not write the letters, and time was identified as the main barrier. The main theme identified from patient feedback was that patients wanted to write the letters in collaboration with the clinician. The pilot phase demonstrated that, on average, the new letters took less time to write.

[Osteopathic practice in the United Kingdom: A retrospective analysis of practice data](#)

PLoS One 17(7), 2022

To better understand the role of osteopathy in UK health service delivery, the profession needs to do more research with patients in order to understand their needs and their expected outcomes of care, and for this to inform osteopathic practice and education.

Workforce perspectives and mental health

[Therapeutic approaches and conceptions of practice of osteopaths in Australia - a national cross-sectional study and exploratory factor analysis of the Osteo-TAQ](#)

BMC Health Services Research 24, 2024

691 Australian osteopaths provided data for the study, representing 25% of the Australian osteopathic profession. Empirically the number of factors to extract based on the parallel analysis was seven. Two- and three-factor solutions were evaluated given the underpinning theory identifying two conceptions of practice and three interrelated therapeutic approaches. Both the two- and three-factor solutions were consistent with the underpinning theory with acceptable reliability estimations for each factor. Descriptive data suggested the most common element of the therapeutic approach of Australian osteopaths was establishing rapport, while the least common was 'only talking' with their patients.

[Learning Mindsets and Well-Being and Ill-Being Among Osteopathic Medical Students | Medical Education | JAMA Network Open](#)

JAMA Network Open 7(6), 2024

This survey study including 6622 osteopathic medical school students found significant associations between learning mindsets and indicators of well-being and ill-being, with particularly strong associations among students from historically racially and ethnically marginalized populations.

[Mental health outcomes among osteopathic physicians during COVID-19](#)

International Journal of Osteopathic Medicine 46, 2022

Our survey study demonstrated that osteopathic physicians graduated from a single academic institution experienced

symptoms of anxiety, burnout, and depression during the COVID-19 pandemic based on the validated questionnaires.

[Discrimination, bullying or harassment in undergraduate education in the osteopathic, chiropractic and physiotherapy professions: A systematic review with critical interpretive synthesis](#)

International Journal of Educational Research Open 3, 2022
We highlighted that bullying is prevalent within undergraduate MT education. This is reported to have a large impact upon learners' wellbeing and attainment. Attainment gaps and higher attrition rates for students from ethnic minority groups and students with disabilities in UK physiotherapy were noted in our review, this may not be applicable to other contexts.

[An exploration of the clinical reasoning used by registered osteopaths in their choice of therapeutic approach](#) Abstract only*

International Journal of Osteopathic Medicine 46, 2022

Four main themes emerged from the qualitative phase: (1) Patient/person Centred Care, (2) Practitioner Wellbeing, (3) Experiential Learning and (4) Integrating Evidence.

[Joining the workforce during the COVID-19 pandemic: views of Allied Health Profession students](#)

Journal of Interprofessional Care 36(5), 2022

Although the transition from student to practitioner continues to be a stressful period, only a minority of participants reported COVID-19 as an explicit stressor.

[Wellbeing and coping of UK nurses, midwives and allied health professionals during COVID-19-a cross-sectional study](#)

PLoS One 17(9), 2022

This workforce would benefit from additional support/services to prevent further deterioration in mental health and wellbeing and optimise workforce retention.

[A blame game and sticky labels: A qualitative study of osteopaths' experiences of managing patients with pain catastrophising](#) Abstract only*

International Journal of Osteopathic Medicine 39, 2021

Osteopaths found the construct of catastrophising clinically useful as they felt it possessed properties distinct from other negative psychosocial factors. Also, they felt relatively comfortable at managing the state in patients.

[Burnout, Perceived Stress, Sleep Quality, and Smartphone Use: A Survey of Osteopathic Medical Students](#)

Journal of Osteopathic Medicine 120(1), 2020

Burnout is a widespread problem in numerous professions but is particularly high among medical students, residents, and early-career physicians compared with college graduates of similar age. However, minimal research has addressed burnout in osteopathic medical students.

[Alternative medicines worth researching? Citation analyses of acupuncture, chiropractic, homeopathy, and osteopathy 1996–2017](#)

Scientometrics 126, 2020

Whilst the research tends to be cited at a below average rate in most broad fields (n = 27) and years (1996–2017), acupuncture, chiropractic, and homeopathy are exceptions in some broad fields, including some core areas. Thus, studying these alternative medicines may not always lead to research that tends to be ignored in academia, even if many scientists disparage it.

Competency Frameworks

[Osteopathic Practice Standards](#)

General Osteopathic Council, no date

The Osteopathic Practice Standards set out the standards of conduct, ethics and competence required of osteopaths to ensure high-quality care for patients.

***Help accessing articles or papers**

Where a report/ journal article or resource is freely available the link has been provided. If an NHS OpenAthens account is required this has been indicated. It has also been highlighted if only the abstract is available. If you do not have an OpenAthens account you can [self-register here](#).

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