Use of Osteopathic Manipulative Treatment (OMT) to Treat Congenital Torticollis and Positional Plagiocephaly in an Infant: A Case Report
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Abstract
Positional plagiocephaly is a cranial asymmetry characterized by occipital flattening in infants. The most common associated finding is Congenital Muscular Torticollis (CMT). CMT is the unilateral twisting of the head due to asymmetry in the length or strength of the sternocleidomastoid (SCM) muscle. It is the most common congenital musculoskeletal abnormality, with an incidence as high as 16% in normal newborns, and is often underreported and underdiagnosed in infants with positional plagiocephaly. Untreated CMT does not resolve over time in the majority of cases and is associated with persistent delays in gross motor skills, problem solving, personal-social interaction, fine motor control, and communication. OMT offers an efficacious, non-invasive, and cost-effective treatment option. The authors present a case of a 7-month-old female with a history of CMT diagnosed at 4 months old presenting to the office with a “misshaped head”. The patient had negative MRI findings and was receiving PT since initial diagnosis. She had marked improvement in head rotation and shoulder stiffness, but persisting head asymmetry with significant motor delays. Osteopathic structural exam revealed somatic dysfunctions in the head, cervical, thoracic, and rib cage regions. Following three sessions of OMT focused on treating muscle spasms and addressing ligamentous strain patterns over a 2-month period, an improvement in head symmetry and gain in motor skills was observed. This case espouses the beneficial role of OMT use in the treatment of CMT and positional plagiocephaly in conjunction with other conservative treatment.