AOA Bureau of Research provides retrospective on 2000 Research Conference

Several years ago, the AOA Bureau of Research (BOR) identified the need for a newsletter to inform the research community of relevant events. “New & noteworthy” is designed to serve this need. On a regular basis, this section will provide updates on research programs that the American Osteopathic Association and its Bureau of Research (BOR) have undertaken. This information is intended to stimulate interest among readers.

Groups pledge support of osteopathic research center

Two break-out sessions of the second Osteopathic Collaborative Clinical Trials Initiative Conference (OCCTIC-II) addressed the evolving issue of an osteopathic research center. (See January JAOA, p 13.) The center’s focus, at least initially, will be on osteopathic manipulative treatment and osteopathic principles and practices. The specific goals for this center are to promote a culture of research, coordinate research efforts between various osteopathic facilities, and develop research protocols and procedures.

The American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM), American Osteopathic Association (AOA), American Osteopathic Foundation (AOF), American Academy of Osteopathy (AAO), American Osteopathic Healthcare Association/Association of Osteopathic Directors of Medical Education (AOHA/AODME), and American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians (ACOFP) have pledged support in the form of effort and financial assistance. Sufficient funds have been committed to operate the center for the first 3 years. It is anticipated that the center will become competitive in the national medical/scientific environment and derive its ongoing support from federal, private, and corporate sources. The center is intended to be an evolving consortium for research at colleges of osteopathic medicine (COMs).

The center structure will be patterned after recommendations found in a typical National Institutes of Health Request for Application (NIH-RFA) (see http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-NR-01-001.html). The primary site will be at one of the COMs. Three or four additional COMs will be selected to form the consortium. The center director and a business official will be located at the primary site. Also, a scientific administrator to advise the director may be at the primary site or at one of the consortium COMs.

Selection of the primary site has been assigned to an expert advisory committee composed of highly qualified members from inside and outside the osteopathic medical profession. J. Justin McCormick, PhD, is committee chairman. Dr McCormick is cofounder and leader of the Carcinogenesis Laboratory at Michigan State University (MSU). This laboratory is currently the largest biomedical research unit at MSU, and it has raised more than $18 million of support. MSU-COM is not among the COMs that have applied to be the center’s primary site. Murray Goldstein, DO, former head of the NIH National Institute of Neurological Diseases and Stroke (NINDS) and current medical director of the Cerebral Palsy Research and Education Foundation, is the other committee member from within the osteopathic medical profession.

Committee members from outside the osteopathic medical profession include Tim Carey, MD, MPH, and Gunnar B. J. Anderson, MD, PhD. Dr Carey is chairman of Medicine at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Dr Carey is known to the osteopathic medical profession through his participation in the first OCCTIC in December 1999. Also, he is a participant in one of the largest research projects recently funded by the AOA Bureau of Research, the Maine Osteopathic Outcomes Study on low back pain. Dr Anderson is chair of orthopedic surgery at Rush-Presbyterian-St Luke’s Medical Center in Chicago. Dr Anderson led an OMT low back pain research effort that was funded through the AOA. The results were published in the November 4, 1999 issue of the New England Journal of Medicine.

Program aimed at better understanding of aging

The year 2000 marked an historical opportunity for the osteopathic medical profession and the AOA Research Conference to demonstrate a commitment to meeting future challenges of healthcare in an aging population and to share knowledge in developing a better understanding of the process of aging. Norbert Seidler, PhD, chaired the 2000 AOA Research Conference with a program carefully constructed to provide relevant information on the theme “Understanding the Process of Aging.” The material that was presented will be of increasing importance into the foreseeable future, as by the year 2020, more than 20% of Americans will be older than 65 years.

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Speakers look at “Molecular Mechanisms of Aging”

At the first day’s session, speakers focused on “Molecular Mechanisms of Aging.” Four AOA Research Fellowship presentations followed. The fellowship presentation by Ehab E. Tuppo, DO, MS, was particularly relevant to the conference theme. It is estimated that at least 4 million people in the United States suffer from Alzheimer’s disease (AD) and up to 50% of people older than 85 years have AD. Although the cause of the disease is not known, evidence exists that indicates that oxidative stress and inflammation resulting in the death of neurons may contribute to the disease.

Dr Tuppo, with a group of physicians and scientists at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey–School of Osteopathic Medicine in Stratford, measured biomarkers of free radical-induced lipid oxidation (8-iso prostaglandin F(2α) and enzymatic transformation of arachidonic acid in urine. They found that patients with probable AD had significant elevations of these biomarkers as compared with levels in subjects without AD. This finding suggests that oxidative stress is occurring in patients with dementia and probable AD.
The American College of Osteopathic Neurologists and Psychiatrists cosponsored the second day’s program, centered on the theme “Diseases of the Elderly: Focus on Alzheimer’s Disease.” Denham Harman, MD, PhD, gave a notable presentation on “Alzheimer’s Disease: A Hypothesis on Pathogenesis.” Dr Harman has received wide recognition for formulating the free radical theory of aging in 1954. The theory has subsequently been applied to the etiology of numerous diseases.

During their evening meeting, the research directors fleshed out some of the ideas generated at the previous evening’s reception about possible modifications of the structure of the research conference.

**Luncheon features Louisa Burns Laureate’s lecture, research and scholarly awards**

- **The Louisa Burns Luncheon and Lecture** followed the second day’s didactic session. More than 90 guests of the BOR attended the luncheon and listened to the Louisa Burns Laureate, Norman Gevitz, PhD, discussed: “Re-searched and Demonstrated: Inquiry and Infrastructure in Osteopathic Institutions.” The text of the lecture by Dr Gevitz, who is professor and chairman in the Department of Social Medicine at the Ohio University College of Osteopathic Medicine (OUCOM), Athens, appears in this issue of JAOA, beginning on page 174.

After Dr Gevitz’ lecture, BOR Chairman Bernard R. Rubin, DO, presented the following AOA-sponsored awards:

- **The Gutensohn/Denslow Award** to Terrie E. Taylor, DO, a professor in the Department of Internal Medicine at MSU-COM. Dr Taylor has been actively involved in research and training at the Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital, Blantyre, Malawi. She was a cofounder of the Malaria Project there in 1987. For 6 months each year, Dr Taylor lives in Malawi, where her research focuses on the pathogenesis and treatment of cerebral malaria in Malawian children. Michigan State University (MSU) medical students and residents enjoy elective rotations under Dr Taylor’s supervision in Malawi, and University of Malawi College of Medicine graduates are receiving postgraduate training under her supervision.

- **The Irvin M. Korr Award** jointly to Veronica M. Maher, PhD, and J. Justin McCormick, PhD, for their combined work in the Carcinogenesis Laboratory at MSU-COM. Both recipients are University Distinguished Professors in the Department of Microbiology and Molecular Genetics and the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology. In the past 24 years, $18 million in research funding has been awarded to Drs Maher and McCormick for research projects in the Carcinogenesis Laboratory.

- **The Burnett Osteopathic Student Research Award** to David P. Russo, MS-III, a student at the University of North Texas Health Science Center at Fort Worth (UNTHSC). He earned his bachelor of arts degree in psychology at the University of California, Berkeley. His research interests include assessing manual medicine treatment outcomes, biopsychosocial correlates of health, and the epidemiology of chronic disease. He intends to pursue a residency in physical medicine and rehabilitation.

- **The George W. Northup Writing Award**, which honors the late George W. Northup, DO, who was the AOA’s editor in chief for 26 years, to the authors of the article, “Standard osteopathic manipulative treatment acutely improves gait performance in patients with Parkinson’s disease.” Michael R. Wells, PhD, the chairman of biomechanics and bioengineering at the New York College of Osteopathic Medicine of New York Institute of Technology in Old Westbury, is the principal author of the article (published in the February 1999 issue of JAOA).

**Wellness promotion in elderly theme of final session**

The third day of the AOA Research Conference featured a session on “Promoting Wellness in the Elderly.” Presentations were on caloric restriction, oxidative stress and aging; nutrition and immune function in the elderly; HIV in the elderly; perspectives on risk and prevention; and can OMT prevent the effects of aging?

**BOR calls for proposals for 2003 conference**

A call for proposals for the scientific program chairman and cochairman (an osteopathic physician) of the 2003 Annual Research Conference will be sent out in August 2001, with a receipt deadline sometime in October. The BOR will consider proposals at its meeting in November 2001. Individuals who are interested in submitting a proposal are invited to discuss their plans with Richard C. Rose, PhD, at AOA (Tel 312-202-8109) or e-mail rrose@aoa-net.org.