SPECIAL ARTICLE

Streamlining Osteopathic Education During the War Emergency *

JOSEPH M. PEACH, DEAN,
Kansas City College of Osteopathy and Surgery
Kansas City, Mo.

The osteopathic profession early recognized its patriotic duty to make available to our country its services. This recognition antedated by many months the outbreak of hostilities. These services have been offered to our nation, in the words of the president of the American Osteopathic Association, "formally, officially, repeatedly and unreservedly." It has been the aim, the wish, the desire, the ambition, of the doctors of our profession, the colleges and hospitals, to lend every support to the war effort and to insure victory for our nation and our allies.

To demonstrate the realism and promptness with which our colleges assumed their responsibility in support of the war effort I cite the December meeting of the American Association of Osteopathic Colleges held in Chicago at the time of the midyear meeting of the Executive Committee of our National Association. This meeting, held only a few days following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, resulted in the immediate establishment and placing in effect, at once, of the accelerated program of training in our colleges. I call your attention to this action by our colleges, now, eighteen months later, with some degree of pride. We early recognized our job as one contributing to the furtherance of the war effort, war production, and public welfare and we did something about it.

In viewing the increased importance that our profession has been permitted to assume in contributing to the winning of this war, I know that this action by our schools has not passed unnoticed by Federal agencies. The recognition of our profession as an "essential occupation" rendering an "essential service" gives us justifiable pride.

From the journals, the radio and the press all of us are familiar with the general operation of the accelerated programs that have been developed and put into effect throughout the nation to provide the specialized training where there is found to be a shortage of skilled and highly trained workers. In our colleges the acceleration has been brought about by doing away with the usual summer vacation and continuing the educational program on through the whole of the calendar year. It is as simple as that.

The actual period of training has not been shortened, the quality of the training has certainly not been decreased; in fact, due to the added responsibility felt by both students and faculty, there has been noted a recognizable improvement in the standards of accomplishment.

In discussing this subject with a group such as we have here today our interests do not lie in what this "accelerated program" is. That we already know. The thing we want to know is how it works in actual practice. The following subjects will be discussed in answering the question of "how it works": (a) schedules, (b) entering classes, (c) faculty assignments, (d) curriculum adjustments, (e) observations on the working of the program up to this time.

The "college year" which is the unit of our educational program is a period of thirty-six weeks, commonly designated in licensing terminology as nine months. The conditions of the accelerated program can be met under the "semester" or the "trimester" or the "quarter" plan of operation. For the practical purposes of our discussion forty-eight of the fifty-two weeks of the calendar year are utilized for instructional purposes. This allows four weeks during the year for vacations. These vacations occur in approximately this fashion: one week at Christmas time, a succeeding two weeks vacation at the conclusion of one of the established periods of instruction, and a one week vacation period at another. These breaks in the schedule provide only a minimum of relaxation and diversion for the faculty and student body. Evidence of mental fatigue and stress in the faculty and student bodies is beginning to be noticed, but it is felt that the urgency of the times justifies the continuation of the plan adopted.

The "quarter" plan of operation seems to lend itself best to the accelerated program and the majority of our schools are now following that plan. It consists of dividing the "college year" into three periods of twelve weeks each in place of the traditional "semester" plan of two periods of eighteen weeks. This permits the stabilizing of the opening and closing dates of the sessions in September, December, March and June of each year. These dates fit in well with the corresponding dates of colleges providing us with our matriculants.

Members of state boards of licensure are finding it necessary to alter the time of their examinations to conform to this accelerated program. The effective dates of this program began with the first class to be graduated under the accelerated program in early March of 1943, to be followed by the next regular class in December of this year, to be followed by the class of late August 1944, to be followed by the class of May 1945, etc. Of course there will be small mid-year classes between these dates but these facts are brought to attention to demonstrate the progression of the program.

During the school year just passed the number of matriculants entering our colleges was slightly in excess of those entering during the preceding year. This is encouraging. However, with the opening of our new school year in March, 1943, and in view of our...
June enrollment a reverse trend has set in. We of the colleges are looking forward with hope but also some anxiety to our fall enrollment. The reservoir of qualified matriculants is rapidly becoming smaller due to the demands of the armed forces, the operation of the Army and Navy Specialized Training Program and the natural inclination of young men to postpone their educational ambitions in favor of entering the armed forces. Selective Service and the War Manpower Commission have made adequate provisions for the deferment of preosteopathic and osteopathic students, but the lure of the uniform, the feeling that I have observed with increasing regularity in our men that they should be in uniform, is making it increasingly difficult for us of the colleges to recruit and maintain an adequate student body.

This is a very real problem but one that can be and must be met. The fact that the dire need for physicians is becoming increasingly evident with each passing day must be regularly kept before us, and the profession, which has always been the chief source for the recruiting of our students, must redouble its efforts. It is acknowledged that the M.D. schools of our country, running to capacity as they are, cannot supply the demands and this gives weight to the importance of the contribution that our schools can make to the war effort if we can just be assured of full classes. Lacking government subsidy for the education of our students, we must have professional support. The importance of our success in meeting the challenge of the Osteopathic Progress Fund Campaign and the effect that such success will have in enabling us to establish and maintain educational standards that will bear inspection and investigation by Federal agencies cannot be overlooked. The responsibility of the profession to its colleges will determine our future.

Our faculties are made up of both full-time and part-time members. We have always found it necessary to rely extensively, and justifiably so, on such help by part-time, volunteer instructors. The effect of the increasing demands of practice, the decrease in the number of physicians and surgeons to meet the health needs of the people, is becoming increasingly felt by our profession and this speeding up of the tempo is being handled by providing to our students that we have been accustomed to secure from our part-time faculty. We are finding it increasingly difficult to secure and hold the services of full-time personnel. The monetary differential between what we can pay our men and what they can earn through practice is so great as to make it a very real sacrifice for any physician to be called upon to make. The fact that we do have men and women willing to continue with their faculty duties is a marvelous example of professional loyalty and support. The quality of instruction is being maintained with difficulty due to the previously mentioned circumstances and this is one of our most difficult problems to solve.

The curriculum of our colleges has been subjected to no drastic changes. It has been under continuous observation, study, and improvement for years. Subjects of military importance have been introduced within the content of courses already existing. These include greater stress on preventive medicine, hygiene, sanitation and public health, the introduction of parasitology and tropical medicine as a separate and new division of instruction. The increased importance of shock and hemorrhage in practice and the proper recognition and application of correct therapeutic methods is recognized. Traumatic surgery and the handling and treatment of wounds, burns, gas casualties is included in established courses in surgery. The increasing attention to children's diseases, nutrition and orthopedics is noted. The curricular content of our program reflects an awareness and recognition of the demands made upon our graduates.

In conclusion this summarization is made:

1. The schedules of the various colleges have been adjusted to the needs of the accelerated educational program.
2. The program is operating in a reasonably satisfactory fashion.
3. The standards of time and quality are being maintained.
4. The outlook for matriculants for classes including the class of September 1943, is not good.
5. Re-emphasis of the importance of student selection and guidance to enable our colleges to exist is again stressed.
6. The present and future increased demands of the public for the services of our profession is a very real problem in the maintenance of our faculties.
7. The curricular content has been brought into line with war developments.
8. The “accelerated program” is an emergency program occasioned by the war needs of our country. It should be modified by returning to our prewar status at the earliest practicable time, particularly as it relates to shortened course and multiplicity of entering classes.

OSTEOPATHIC PROGRESS FUND CAMPAIGN MOVES FORWARD

Definite plans for the fund began last December at a joint meeting of representatives of the colleges with the Executive Committee of the American Osteopathic Association. It was launched with the help and guidance of the American City Bureau. When it had got well on its way it was taken back into the hands of the colleges themselves—your colleges.

Tasks like this may not drag on forever. They progress by stages, but in each stage weeks, even days, count. You have read the story. You have heard what your college and the others, are not just planning, but doing. You have read of the spending of money, the purchase of land, the beginning of building, the employment of faculty members.

These things have been done because of the certainty of your cooperation and support. These must be forthcoming now. That means writing a check today, for the college of your choice.