AOA low-back pain research project

The AOA Bureau of Research, with the support of the AOA Board of Trustees, has embarked upon a pilot study to assist in the development of a significant research project on manipulative medicine. The project will examine the effect of osteopathic manipulative treatment on low-back pain. Myron S. Magen, D.O., dean of the Michigan State University College of Osteopathic Medicine, has been appointed as the principal investigator, with W. Douglas Ward, Ph.D., director of the AOA Department of Education, serving as the project administrator. Financial support for the first phase of the project has come in the form of grant from the Quad City Osteopathic Foundation of Davenport, Iowa, in the amount of \$90,000.

Currently underway, the initial phase involves the design of a clinical research protocol. This critical segment of the research project is being directed by a design panel, which is chaired by Dr. Magen and includes the following members: Gunnar Anderson, M.D., professor and associate chairman of the Department of Orthopedic Surgery, Rush-Presbyterian-St. Luke's Medical Center, Chicago; Philip Greenman, D.O., associate dean and professor of biomechanics, MSUCOM, East Lansing; Victor Hawthorne, M.D., professor emeritus, Department of Epidemiology, University of Michigan, School of Public Health, Ann Arbor; and Fletcher McDowell, M.D., professor of neurology, Cornell University Medical School, Cornell, New York.

The colleges of osteopathic medicine will be invited to participate; on the basis of criteria being developed, they will be chosen on their ability and willingness to meet the protocol characteristics.

During the past 15 years, at least ten controlled clinical trials of spinal manipulation have been reported in the literature. In a survey by Winer,¹ it was shown that most of these trials were conducted in Europe or Australia. None of the reported trials was conducted by osteopathic physicians in the United States.

The difficulties in clinical trials of spinal manipulation are many and significant. The AOA research project is important not only to the

osteopathic medical profession, but to the entire health care profession and its patients as well. Definitive, well-designed, controlled studies such as the low-back pain research project are vital.

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1. Winer, C.E.R.: A survey of controlled clinical trials of spinal manipulation. In *Aspects of manipulative therapy*, edited by E.F. Glasgow, et al. Ed. 2. Churchill Livingstone, Inc., New York, 1985

Twice learned

It has been said that to teach is to twice learn. Since the time of Hippocrates, physicians have been admonished to share their knowledge and experience with their colleagues, particularly those in training. In reality, all of us, regardless of age, are literally "in training," due to the rapid advancements that are taking place in medical care today.

As our profession grows, the demand for teachers at both the graduate and undergraduate levels also increases. It has been said that the higher one goes on the so-called educational ladder, the less likely one is to find teachers who have been taught anything about the art of teaching. Gradually, we are seeing colleges and medical schools sending faculty members for postdoctoral classes in the art and methodology of the teaching professions.

There are few natural teachers. For the most part, effective teachers have themselves become students of pedagogic techniques, and, in medicine, particularly of the art of bedside teaching and learning. It is not sufficient for medical instructors to lead students through a maze of "unusual cases," only to discover that very little time has been spent teaching the fundamentals of diagnosis and treatment of the common problems encountered in the daily practice of medicine.

The medical schools of today, whether allopathic or osteopathic, are responding to the public demand that a physician's life should be one of continuing medical education. Education does not stop at commencement day when the coveted D.O. or M.D. degree is awarded. Actually, graduation is an admission ticket to a lifetime of learning and, hope-