

Beyond MEDLINE

To investigate the discrepancy between European physicians' treatment of benign prostatic hyperplasia with saw palmetto extract (SPE) and American physicians' general disregard of SPE because of a lack of research, John M. McPartland, DO, MS, and P.L. Pruitt, DVM, conducted a literature search and a clinical trial. The report of their study begins on page 89. They began their literature search with MEDLINE, and then expanded it to include alternative databases—AGRICOLA, EMBASE, IBIS, and Cochrane—plus a manual search of herbal journals not indexed on any database. They found that MEDLINE yielded only 19 clinical trials versus 58 found in the expanded search, thereby demonstrating the inadequacy of MEDLINE as a “stand-alone search engine for locating information about an herbal medicine.”

Also, these authors hypothesize, “much of the literature regarding herbal medicine, like the literature regarding osteopathic manipulative treatment [OMT], is not indexed by MEDLINE.” True, the first 64 volumes of *JAOA* were not indexed. PubMed (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov>), the search service providing access to MEDLINE, began indexing *JAOA* for online files with Volume 65, Number 1, September 1965. A recent search by journal name yielded 3923 citations; 38 citations for “osteopathic manipulative treatment” (earliest entry 1994), and 1240 citations for “osteopathic medicine.”

Two entries in this month's “Letters” section looking at—and even questioning—the publication of osteopathic research in *JAOA* versus allopathic publications acknowledge that *JAOA* is the *only* osteopathic medical publication indexed on MEDLINE. Note, for its entries, the National Library of Medicine (NLM) uses the abbreviation *J Am Osteopath Assoc*, not *JAOA*.

These observations about literature databases available to osteopathic medical researchers lead to one conclusion: Currently, there exists no comprehensive index to the world's osteopathic medical literature. But that situation is soon to change. In September 1997, work began on a 5-year contract to develop such an index. The project, sponsored by the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine and the American Osteopathic Association Bureau of Research, will enable global access to and shared use of osteopathic medicine's unique literature. Terms derived from the NLM Medical Subject Headings (MeSH), the “Glossary of Osteopathic Terminology”¹ and other accepted osteopathic terms will constitute a thesaurus of terms that will enhance subject searching. Editorial and advisory boards appointed by the two sponsors are monitoring the work on the project.

This index, when completed, will provide the osteopathic medical profession with convenient global access to the osteopathic medicine literature via the World Wide Web. Its scope will include osteopathic principles, practices and philosophy, osteopathic manipulative treatment, the history of osteopathic medicine, and relevant literature from nonosteopathic medicine.

The University of North Texas Health Science Center (UNTHSC), Gibson D. Lewis Health Sciences Library in Fort Worth is providing general project administration, development of the database, indexing support, and indexing of the post-1950 literature. The A.T. Still Memorial Library at Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine (KCOM), Kirksville, Mo, the founding osteopathic library, is indexing the pre-1950 materials contained in its National Center for Osteopathic History. To date, approximately 8000 records from 15 serial titles are in various stages of the indexing process—data entry, abstracting, proofreading, and editing. The index will comprise citations and abstracts of journal articles, book chapters, audiovisual, and electronic resources on all aspects of osteopathic medicine, OMT, and relevant manual medicine literature.

Personnel involved in this 5-year project include the following persons at UNTHSC: Lynn F. Johnson, MIS, special projects librarian, the database project coordinator at UNTHSC; Peter Brigaitis, indexer; Ann Halligan, MIS, proofreader; Ywanda Kimbrough, MSIS, indexer; Kim Reynolds, data entry; Marsha Tidrick, data entry; and Gary Wilson, programmer. *JAOA* acknowledges their provision of the raw data for *JAOA*'s Subject Index to Volume 99, which appeared in the January 2000 issue.

Others involved in the ongoing 5-year project include the following personnel of the Gibson D. Lewis Library at UNTHSC: Bobby Carter, MS, library director; Ann Brooks, MLS, MBA, associate director of public services; Craig Elam, MLS, associate director of technical services; and Dohn Martin, MLS, associate director of biomedical informatics. Lawrence Onsager, ML, MA, library director, and Bob Sanders, MA, MEd, indexer at the A.T. Still Memorial Library at KCOM, are also involved in the development of the comprehensive index to osteopathic medical literature.

This issue of *JAOA*, in continuing its commemoration of its 100th volume, republishes the eulogies on the death of A.T. Still. No more fitting tribute can be made to him today than the UNTHSC/KCOM libraries' ongoing development of a universally available comprehensive database on the principles, philosophy, and practices of the profession he founded. It is hoped that such an index will further the realization of osteopathic medicine's unity and identity.

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Reference

1. Glossary of osteopathic terminology. In: *Yearbook and Directory of Osteopathic Physicians*, 91st ed. Chicago, Ill: American Osteopathic Association; 2000.