

Osteopathic Education Looks Ahead*

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"The world today needs men who believe that this is a good world and who will work to make it a better one; men to whom honesty is not a policy, but their normal state of being; whose consciences respond to right and truth with the steadiness of the needle to the pole; men who have the courage of their convictions and dare to proclaim them though the heavens totter and the earth yawns; men who prefer honor to wealth, truth to sophistry, kindness to covetousness, modesty to vain-gloriousness, service to recognition, humility to grandeur, usefulness to reward; men who have found their business in life and attend to it; who neither lie, shirk, nor meddle; who have a definite aim, go straight for it, and treat failures as stepping-stones to success; men who dare to think for themselves, to drink out of their own wells and eat their own sweet bread, earned by the toil of willing hands and brains; men who, surrounded by barnacles, bores, busybodies, fanatics, knaves, pests, triflers and wisecracks, manage to maintain their faith in God and the high destiny of the human race."[†]

What an eloquent expression of sublime idealism. There are those who insist that idealism was very fine for those old fogies of long ago, but this is 1948 and we live in a different order. It is particularly refreshing then to find this editorial in *Nuggets* recently. Idealism is not dead, but what the world needs most is a greater return to idealism. We need to pause to reflect that America was made great not by wages, but

by work, and osteopathy was made great not by large fees and incomes to her practitioners, but by service to sick humanity.

Education, osteopathic or otherwise, is idealism at work. One might interpret education as an attempt to learn about man and the universe in which he lives, for the purpose of finding out how best we can live with and serve our Creator and our fellow men. To this end we have created the largest project, for we have invested more capital in education than in any other industry; there are more people engaged in teaching and learning than in any other pursuit. What remains to be done is to expand these efforts, yet keep to the basic purpose of trying to make the world a better place in which to live.

THE FUTURE LIES IN THE HANDS OF OUR STUDENTS

The immediate future of our profession lies chiefly in the hands of ourselves and in the hands of those whom we have chosen as our leaders. These people are not all members of our profession. They have been, from time to time, recruited from various pursuits and incorporated in our little circle. In the future our profession will be, in major part, in the hands of those whom we now allow to enter the doors of our colleges. It must follow that if we would discharge our responsibility to posterity we must give much time, effort, and consideration to the selection of those who are to follow in our footsteps. It is easy to understand then why student selection is the perennial first concern of college administrators. We need the help of our profession and indeed the help of all who are interested in the future of our youth.

*Delivered before the General Sessions of the Fifty-Second Annual Convention of the American Osteopathic Association, Boston, July 22, 1948.

[†]Reprinted from *Nuggets*.

Editor's note

The pages appearing in this "Special reprints" section have been electronically scanned from the original journals in which they appeared. Consequently, the scanning process at a density to enhance readability has picked up such artifacts as "bleed-through" type from reverse pages and other "blemishes" that existed in the original paper on which the text was printed. Even the yellowing of the original pages has caused some darkening of the margins. *JAOA* regrets these anomalies and hopes that readers will overlook them and concentrate on the content of these works published in the osteopathic medical profession's early history.

For interest sake, concluding pages of articles may contain "newsy" items of the original date.

Gilbert E. D'Alonzo, DO, November 2001

THE SOURCE OF OUR STUDENTS

The students entering osteopathic colleges today come from the finest institutions of higher learning in the land. In these colleges and universities they have been influenced by a number of teachers and in particular by premedical advisers. It becomes imperative that the premedical advisers specifically, but also the deans and professors of colleges of liberal arts and science, have a clear understanding of our principles and policies, for we must lean very heavily upon them for cooperation and advice. These men are coming to know that we want only those who by temperament and preparation will be able to carry on our profession to the best interests of mankind, men and women who will become not only good doctors, but good citizens as well.

No one is more able to provide the early education for our doctors than the teachers in the colleges of liberal arts and science. Therefore, we must cause these teachers to see that we want liberal, broad education, rather than narrow, cold science. We seek people with knowledge, but knowledge tempered with understanding.

Somewhat students in undergraduate schools acquire the idea that they are preparing to come to our colleges and there begin to study to become a doctor. Herein lies the fallacy of the terms "preosteopathic," "premedical," or "preprofessional education." We would much prefer to have the student know that the process of becoming a doctor has already begun as soon as he enters the halls of the college of liberal arts and science. The broad, liberal, general education he is going to need to make him a good doctor he must acquire there. We, in the professional schools, have little enough time to give him the basic scientific and clinical training he will require, and we can make scant provision for cultural training. For the most part any defects in the education of osteopathic physicians today can be laid squarely on the doorsteps of the finest colleges and universities of our great land.

Few, if any, of us have any quarrel with the teaching students receive in chemistry, physics, or biology before coming to us. We do have some misgivings concerning their background in English, literature, ethics, in short, in the humanities and religion.

It has been interesting and profitable to seek out the motivations of those who enter our profession. This is not a problem singular to us, for there is equal concern as to motivation in each of the professions, for motivation has deeper significance in the professions than in any other vocation. We should like to have people choose our profession because they are imbued with the intense desire to serve their fellow men and because they believe that being a physician is the one way in which they can provide such service.

We should like students to choose the osteopathic school because they know and believe that our way of thinking, our principles, are the soundest and best known to man today. We should like these people coming to us to do so with the full knowledge and understanding that they are entering a minority group, and that all things will not be handed to them on a silver platter, but rather that they can anticipate personal sacrifices and oftentimes frustration. Armed with this knowledge in advance, these people will then not quarrel with our profession later on and complain about its shortcomings, but rather will set themselves to the task of making our profession the things they think it should be.

Many students entering our colleges today do so because father, grandfather, uncle, or aunt, or some more distant relative has been or is an osteopathic physician. This second generation has the dangers of inbreeding, but it does have the advantage that the candidate should be fully aware of what the future holds for him.

There is a surprisingly large group of people who seek admission to our schools chiefly or wholly on the advice of their professors or deans of colleges of liberal arts and science. Educators have come to know and respect our profession, and our system of education in particular.

PRINCIPLES UNDERLYING STUDENT SELECTION

The men and women considering osteopathy as a profession number thousands each year. Our schools can accommodate only a small fraction of these people. Each year it becomes increasingly burdensome to process this unwieldy number of candidates to select those whom we believe offer society the best investment. Some of the principles underlying our method of selection have been hinted as we have gone along; other principles are somewhat complex.

Candidates for entrance into osteopathic schools must be of sound body and sound mind. The course in osteopathic medicine is so intense as to challenge even the most stalwart. Certain body states, such as defects in the special senses, etc., may make it impossible for the candidate either to pursue his course with us or to serve his patient fully after training. Each year will probably see greater and greater attention paid to the physical and mental state of our candidates.

It is important to evaluate motivation on the part of those who seek to enter any profession, but it is particularly important in our profession. We have a policy of nondiscrimination for sex, race, or creed, but we do want only the best of each. Nothing can take the place of a personal interview to learn the most about the candidate. It has been the policy of admissions committees of osteopathic colleges to have candidates appear before them. Where distance makes this procedure a hardship, it has been the practice to refer the candidate to one or more osteopathic physicians in his community. The thing we want the osteopathic physician to tell us is whether or not this individual is the kind of person with whom he would like to practice, or whom he would like to have in his association as a colleague.

In the December, 1947, issue of the *Forum of Osteopathy*, Mr. Lawrence Mills, the Vocational Director of the American Osteopathic Association, published a short manual on the procedure of interviewing the prospective osteopathic student. A chart is provided for evaluation of the prospect.* We have adapted this form to our uses routinely in personal interviews and recommend its use by all those who interview students who are thinking about entering an osteopathic college.

The student who enters an osteopathic college must be of proved academic and practical ability. It sometimes comes as a surprise, even as a shock, for candidates and their sponsors to learn that the osteopathic college has carefully studied their high school records as well as their college records. This is one obvious criterion of the student's academic accomplish-

*This chart is reproduced on page 270 of this issue of THE JOURNAL.

ments and ability. The student who tries to squeeze through college with the avowal that he will be a good student in osteopathic school suffers much from these investigations.

The professors in the colleges of liberal arts and science are charged with the responsibility of providing the preliminary education for our students. They are very capable of judging the student's caliber and we can profit by their advice. It is not unusual for one of these professors to tell us that none of his recommended candidates has ever failed in professional school. Many colleges and universities have a committee on recommendation to medical school. Without a recommendation from such a committee, or the pre-medical adviser, or the dean of the college of liberal arts and science, whichever is the authorized officer, we would not consider an applicant desirable for our school. Furthermore, where the advisory system is well organized, it would be considered a breach of etiquette for any other professor to recommend the candidate. Where a candidate is recommended "with reservations" we feel that he does not represent the type of student for us. The spirit of cooperation between the various colleges and universities and our own osteopathic colleges, has been one of the most stimulating and satisfying fruits of our labors and has made our plans and procedures workable.

Letters of recommendation can be very cheap things and after a certain amount of experience, one learns whose letters of recommendation can be accepted on their face value and whose letters may not state the true facts. In courts of law, character witnesses are given a hearing and I recently heard a federal judge discourse at great length from the bench concerning the importance of character witnesses. We feel that a candidate for an osteopathic school should, in addition to those already named, have letters of recommendation from osteopathic physicians, members of the clergy and people engaged in business.

THE PHILADELPHIA PLAN OF STUDENT SELECTION

We at the Philadelphia College of Osteopathy are committed to the principle that sampling a number of areas will provide a better picture than sampling only one area. This principle is true in academic examinations and it is particularly true in clinical diagnosis. The doctor who bases his opinion on his patient's statements is apt to make many mistakes, the doctor who in addition examines the patient physically and has a certain amount of laboratory work done is apt to make fewer mistakes. So too in selecting students we try to sample as many areas as possible. We have developed a point system of merit and the candidates with the highest number of points, all other things in good order, are selected.

As an objective psychological approach, we subject each candidate to the Vocational Interest Test of Strong. These tests are scored for osteopathic physicians. In our merit score the candidate is allowed points equal to twice his raw score.

Academic achievement is evaluated by a study of high school and college transcripts. The candidate is allowed one point for each semester hour of credit on the college transcript. These points are allowed irrespective of subjects since it is our feeling that the study of literature is important in educating a doctor just as chemistry and physics are important. Using this point system, the candidate with 3 years of college work or 90 semester hours of credit automatically

has more points than the candidate with 60 semester hours or 2 years of college. In like manner the candidate with a degree and 120 to 140 semester hours of credit receives a higher score. We have not yet been willing to raise our minimum entrance requirement above 2 college years.

The professional schools have been criticized for requiring too high scholarship. We agree that we do not want a school full of "bookworms" and geniuses, but some reward should be given for good scholarship. We have felt that the quality point system of colleges and universities would put too much of a premium on scholarship so we have adopted a bonus plan. The college transcript is evaluated and to the merit score is added 2 points for each "A," one point for each "B," no points for "C," one point is deducted for each "D," and two points for each grade below "D." If the bonus should be a negative number the candidate is automatically disqualified for poor scholarship.

Agreeing that motivation is an important consideration, each candidate is subjected to personal interview; he can by this interview gain up to 100 points. During the personal interview other factors are weighed such as military service, qualities of leadership, personal appearance, apparent state of health, manner of dress, choice of adjectives in conversation, and idealism.

Using our point system, the following will show how candidates are scored:

Candidate No. 1

Vocational Interest Test.....	228 points
Semester hours of credit.....	160 points
Scholarship bonus	46 points
Personal interview	88 points

Total 522 points

Candidate No. 2

Vocational Interest Test.....	144 points
Semester hours of credit.....	158 points
Scholarship bonus	68 points
Personal interview	87 points

Total 457 points

It has been our procedure to list candidates numerically, according to their total points. The individual with the greatest number of points is number one in his incoming class, the individual with the lowest number of points is the lowest number in his incoming class. It has been our experience that students do not, under normal circumstances, change their position in their class very much through the 4 years in osteopathic college. When much change occurs we look for extraneous factors. These extraneous factors usually are found to be extracurricular and we can sometimes help the student before he finds himself in serious trouble.

The admissions committees of all osteopathic colleges feel that the selection program is still in its infancy. Everything possible is being done to make sure that the accepted matriculant will not only be successful in completing osteopathic education, but will be successful and happy as an osteopathic physician. It is quite apparent that personality factors, aptitude, and motivation must play as important a part in the selection program as academic records. Good student selection emphasizing all factors will result in the strengthening of the profession.

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