

Research Our Great and Only Hope

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The medical profession generally has contented itself in affecting the belief that osteopathy is but a "transitory fad," and that like many other unproved innovations will in due course of time fade away into the limbo of oblivion. The question as to the permanency of osteopathy has as a matter of fact caused some apprehension within our own ranks. Many a one has asked, and many a time has the question been raised, "Will the practice of osteopathy endure as a complete and an independent system of therapeutics?"

To answer this very vital and disturbing question we must determine: First, What constitutes the Practice of Osteopathy? Secondly, Is it founded upon verifiable and demonstrable principles, and is therefore scientific?

I will at this juncture not endeavor or attempt to answer the first proposition fully or completely. We have had proposed many definitions of osteopathy but suffice it to submit simply at this time that the Practice of Osteopathy is primarily the discovery of Dr. Andrew Taylor Still, viz: Anatomical perversion as the cause of disease and anatomical adjustment its cure. We might consistently add that in the application of the osteopathic philosophy we employ all that has been demonstrated as scientific, rational and effective in the great and varied arts of therapeutics.

Secondly, Is osteopathy founded upon natural laws? Is it the truth? If so, it will positively endure and prevail for all time and none other will supplant it, for truth does not compromise,—it is complete and hence there can be none other. Is osteopathy therapeutic truth? There can be but one way of determining that and this brings us to the title of this argument—"Research Our Great and Only Hope."

To those who would pin their faith to the experimental phase of osteopathy and trust to results achieved by practice, I will only say that such procedure is not scientific,—not defensible and can never advance the art of osteopathy to an unassailable position where she can point to the *Reasons* and the *Wherefores*.

Practice, results as gleaned from simple practice, reduces osteopathy to the plane of medical practice, i. e., makes

it simply empirical. To establish it on a scientific, and hence upon an enduring basis, we must expound and elaborate the laws of nature upon which the practice is founded and demonstrate their application to and operation in the human economy; and hence again—*Research*. The time has come in our history when we must demonstrate to the world the scientific laws that underlie our philosophy and upon which the art of osteopathy is founded.

Empiricism has been the undoing of the medical practice. No one is more aware of this than are the scholars of the medical profession themselves and they have accordingly been most active these past several years in establishing research institutes with other people's money. Can you realize what vast sums have been supplied by Rockefeller, Carnegie and others for the purpose of investigation into the cause and treatment of certain and specific diseases that infest the human race? As a further illustration of what is being done along these lines I will cite for you an institution—hardly known to any one save those directly connected with it,—the "Oncological Hospital," established here in Philadelphia for the sole purpose of learning the cause and treatment of cancer. Conceived of and set into operation by a company of M. D.s, aided by lay friends and supported largely by funds obtained through politics and legislation from the State treasury, this institution has been experimenting as to the cause and cure of cancer for some years.

There is no need of profuse argument revealing the extensive efforts on the part of the M. D.s in the matter of Research endeavor and thereby fortifying their philosophy and incidentally their practice and profession.

In these days of our superiority and prosperity, let us not deceive ourselves into a thought of unassailable security. Let not our unprecedented success and achievements be our very undoing. Remind yourselves of past history in such instances as over-confidence and consequent lethargy. When Rome was the mightiest political and military power in all the world she fell into lethargy, neglected the very principles that made her so powerful and became imbued

with a sense of her impregnability. No wonder the inevitable downfall. It would have been vastly better for the Northern armies if First Bull Run had been lost to them—whereas victory led them to a conclusion that all was won and the war was over.

Mind you, fellow osteopaths,—a second Bull Run may yet have to be fought—yes, must yet be fought! Ours shall not be a Roman Empire reared but to crumble and fall. Let us be alive to the requirements that will guarantee for us the safeguards that will make secure and defend us in our stronghold against all aggressions from without and from the still worse,—the insidious betrayals (through ignorance) from within.

No one would contend that our philosophy has been so conclusively demonstrated and established that definite and specific physiological action can be evoked in any and all individuals under all varying circumstances and conditions and that osteopathic treatment is an invariable specific. No one would gainsay that the osteopathic philosophy is well founded. Reasoning abstractly it is logical and incontrovertible. What is the experience in our practical application of this philosophy? So co-operative that many are prone to accept these results of practical experience as sufficient and conclusive. As a matter of fact, however, occasions occur when the expected "response to treatment" does not ensue! What is the reason or explanation?

Lack of clarification and incomplete classification and correlation of essential data and conditions involved, the physiological importance and significance of which has not as yet been sufficiently elaborated and made applicable. Our etiology, pathology, osteopathic symptomology and therapeutics must be further evolved, verified and facts classified. In proportion as this is advanced will our practical skill and professional usefulness be enhanced. There is but

one way of achieving this and that is through Research.

What service can each of us render in the enthronement of osteopathy upon the pedestal of science?

What service has man rendered for the establishment and perpetuation of policies or principles in which he believed! We need not search ancient or medieval history for evidence. Recall just a little of our own brief history. It is fraught with sacrifices inconceivable and incomprehensible. Comfort, money, life itself has been freely offered and freely consumed upon the altar of sacrifice.

What are you, what is each one of us willing to offer that the principles in which we not only believe, but out of which come the very means for our livelihood, may prosper and become consistently and permanently established?

Many are not qualified and some who are have not the disposition to do this necessary work of scientifically demonstrating the truth that has been projected upon which our philosophy is founded and to further unfold the possibilities encompassed by this system. While nearly all of us have been busily engaged in devoting every hour and every ounce of strength to the up-building of a lucrative practice, there have been a few who could and did delve into the underlying scientific basis upon which the art of osteopathy is founded and have produced data sustaining our hypothesis and our philosophy and have thereby commanded the respect and admiration of the educated world. This work has been done at a great sacrifice on the part of these generous philanthropists. The time has come, however, when we all must pay tribute to this work. It concerns us all. In proportion as the cause prospers will we prosper individually. Plans have been formulated; designs have been worked out; an institution for scientific research—an appropriate building for the study and unfolding of the scientific principles underlying

osteopathy, is to be,—yes, will be erected. Much money has already been contributed. Much more is required. Who has not done his or her part? Who is willing to share in the benefits without sharing in the cost? Is there any one insensate to this moral obligation? We believe not. Many have as yet not had opportunity of doing their part. An auspicious occasion is upon us—a time when such contributions will be especially timely and in order. The time will be July 25-29 and the place Chicago. Opportunity will be afforded to any who have not already subscribed to do so and to those who have to increase theirs if they so desire.

But we can not hope to raise sufficient money for this great work among ourselves. We must receive help from the public. For a well directed canvass for funds from friends and public spirited citizens, use should be made of the splendid booklet just issued by the Board

of Trustees of the Research Institute. This little treatise is perspicuous, comprehensive and sufficiently brief to make possible the reading of it by even the most busy. It presents the whole scheme in a most dignified and appealing manner. No extensive campaign for funds should be attempted without it.

This is a glorious opportunity to further the great cause of osteopathy, and glorious; most extraordinarily glorious, is the work that has already been done. Its future will be assured to all of us and this Temple of Osteopathic Research will be to us the vatican of our hope and inspiration. May it prosper speedily so that he to whom we owe it all may yet behold and bless it before his vision shall have closed to earthly things. May his benediction sanctify if for the use to which it is to be put, and to him shall it be a fitting monument as long as time shall last.

WITHERSPOON BLDG.

Editor's note

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

Gilbert E. D'Alonzo, DO, September 2001