As noted in previous contributions to JAOA—The Journal of the American Osteopathic Association (2005;105:19), the Student Osteopathic Medical Association (SOMA) is “committed to promoting student involvement in research at all the colleges of osteopathic medicine.”

Currently, two student awards are acknowledged each fall at the AOA Research Conference, an event that takes place during the Annual AOA Convention and Scientific Seminar.

Recipients of the annual SOMA Summer Research Fellowship Award present the results of their endowed research in posters displayed at the conference. In addition, osteopathic medical students have the option of submitting abstracts for the annual Student Poster Competition.

SOMA Summer Research Fellowship Award
Through financial gifts from the Osteopathic Heritage Foundation (OHF) in Columbus, Ohio, as well as the Osteopathic Research Center (ORC), which resides at University of North Texas Health Science Center—Texas College of Osteopathic Medicine in Fort Worth, SOMA grants up to five fellowship awards annually.

This cash prize award is prospective and is bestowed on an individual student researcher or group of students who are SOMA members and who have begun (or are beginning) a research project in the field of osteopathic medicine.

The prize is intended to remunerate students for their research efforts and defray their travel expenses for the poster presentation that is required of all award recipients during the Annual AOA Research Conference. Half of the award monies are granted in June and the other half are provided to award winners after poster presentation the following year. A complete timeline is available at http://www.studentdo.com/Files/pdf/research%20fellowship%20application.pdf.

The Student Osteopathic Medical Association is grateful to the OHF and ORC for their ongoing support of osteopathic medical research through this program. We are pleased to report that SOMA continues to have more applicants apply for this fellowship with each successive year.

The application for the SOMA Summer Research Fellowship Award and additional information regarding guidelines for qualifying applicants are available on SOMA’s Website at http://www.studentdo.com/.

Student Poster Competition
During the 2008 AOA Research Conference last October in Las Vegas, Nev, SOMA and the AOA’s Council on Research combined efforts to promote the work of osteopathic medical students who wished to present their research findings to the osteopathic medical community.

In addition to the 57 contributions entered in the Student Poster Competition and submitted directly to the AOA’s Council on Research and the AOA’s editor in chief for review and preconference publication in the JAOA’s annual August theme issue (http://www.jaoa.org/cgi/content/full/108/8/413), attendees at last year’s Annual AOA Research Conference saw an additional 43 student submissions—all eligible for the Student Poster Competition—that were submitted directly through SOMA.

While the SOMA Summer Research Fellowship Award is granted prospectively, the Student Poster Competition awards are given “retrospectively” for completed work. Individuals who have won the SOMA Summer Research Fellowship Award are also eligible for the Student Poster Competition.

Last year’s competition was held on Sunday, October 26, concurrent with the launch of the 3-day Annual AOA Research Conference. Last year’s awards were presented to the following top five research teams:

First Place Awards

- Valerie Cohen, OMS III, et al, from Philadelphia (Pa) College of Osteopathic Medicine (PCOM), for their poster presentation titled “Sensitivity and Specificity of an Imbalance Test Performed on a Force Plate in Rested and Sleep-Deprived Sample Populations” (S05 – see page 45)
- Caitlin Halbert, OMS IV, et al, also from PCOM, for their work, “An Analysis of the Use of Web-Based Materials by Medical Students and its Relationship to Learning Style” (S31 – see page 60)

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Second Place Awards

Eric Gulbrandsen, OMS IV, et al., from Kirksville (Mo) College of Osteopathic Medicine-A.T. Still University for their abstract, “Quality and Availability of Websites for AOA Residency Programs in Comparison to ACGME Programs” (S10 – see page 59)

Omid Hariri, OMS II, et al., at Western University of Health Sciences College of Osteopathic Medicine of the Pacific in Pomona, Calif (WesternU/COMP) for an abstract titled “Membrane Estrogen Receptors Interact with Metabotropic Glutamate 1a Receptors in Hypothalamic Astrocytes to Induce the Synthesis of Progesterone in Hypothalamic Astrocytes” (S12 – see page 52)

Dependra Mahato, OMS III, et al., also from WesternU/COMP, for “The Role of β-Endorphin and Enkephalin in Memory Retrieval in Cocaine-Addicted Mice Using CPP Paradigm” (S18 – see page 54)

An overview of the abstract submission process and information on the Student Poster Competition are available on DO-Online at: https://www.do-online.org/index.cfm?PageID=res_posterpresent.

As noted elsewhere, SOMA’s abstract submission and review process is independent of that used by the Council for the Annual AOA Research Conference.

Because of the constraints imposed by the academic calendar, the submission deadline for SOMA-processed abstracts precludes publication in the August issue of the JAOA with the other abstracts scheduled to appear at the conference’s Poster Session. Forty-two of these abstracts appear on the following pages.

Looking Forward

The Student Osteopathic Medical Association looks forward to contributing to these ongoing collaborative efforts within the profession to promote osteopathic medical research. The year ahead promises to be an exciting one—with many eyes already turning toward the 114th Annual AOA Convention and Scientific Seminar, scheduled for Sunday, November 1, through Thursday, November 5, in New Orleans, La.