One of the biggest challenges facing the osteopathic medical profession is how to increase the number of osteopathic residency positions to accommodate the growing number of osteopathic medical school graduates. Although particularly grave in the “small” osteopathic states—states with new colleges of osteopathic medicine (COMs) or a limited number of medical educators who are board certified by the American Osteopathic Association (AOA)—this challenge affects osteopathic training across our nation.

Several years ago, the AOA addressed this challenge by launching the Osteopathic Graduate Medical Education (OGME) Development Initiative to assist nonteaching hospitals in starting new osteopathic training programs. Working collaboratively with Osteopathic Postdoctoral Training Institutions (OPTIs), COMs, specialty colleges, and other osteopathic medical organizations, the Initiative provides peer-to-peer assistance and information to hospitals without osteopathic teaching programs, hospitals with allopathic training programs that are interested in dual accreditation, and hospitals with osteopathic programs that are struggling.

Central to the Initiative is a corps of consultants who are knowledgeable about OGME and who are ready to work with hospital and physician leadership in developing osteopathic training programs. These consultants have expertise in such topics as strategic graduate medical education planning, Medicare funding, AOA accreditation, and specialty college standards. Consultants include directors of medical education, specialty college program directors, deans, OPTI academic officers, hospital chief executive officers, and other senior administrators. The AOA bears the costs of these services, which are provided to prospective teaching hospitals free of charge.

Since its inception, the Initiative has worked with 45 hospitals in 25 states, some with no osteopathic training programs prior to collaborating with the Initiative. The Initiative works hand-in-hand with OPTIs and COMs so that prospective osteopathic teaching hospitals have the assistance, support, and information they need to develop high-quality osteopathic programs. The Initiative receives direct requests for assistance from interested hospitals and requests for referrals from OPTIs, COMs, specialty societies, AOA leadership, and AOA members.

We are asking for the JAOA’s help in educating readers about the Initiative. Strong physician support for osteopathic training is critical as we reach out to new training sites and assist them in developing successful, high-quality residency programs. Readers of the JAOA are asked to support the Initiative by talking about it with local hospitals and suggesting that hospitals interested in osteopathic training contact the Initiative at OGMEDevelopment@osteopathic.org.

Please team up with us to tackle one of the highest priorities for the osteopathic medical profession: increasing the number of high-quality postdoctoral training opportunities for COM graduates. By working as a team, we have no doubt that the profession can address this critical challenge.

Questions about the Initiative can be directed to Margaret Hardy, JD, AOA Director of Hospital and Medical Educator Affairs, at (202) 414-0155 or mhardy@osteopathic.org.

Dr Nichols is the president of the American Osteopathic Association. Dr Buser is the chair of the Bureau of Osteopathic Graduate Medical Education Development.

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