



View From the Pyramids

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EDITORIAL

In his autobiography, the founder of osteopathic medicine wrote, “I am simply trying to teach you what you are; to get you to realize your right to health, and when you see the cures wrought here, after all other means have failed, you can but know that the foundation of my work is laid on Nature’s rock.”¹

What a prophetic man to write such a quote. Ask any DO in practice and you will find that the majority have seen the “end of the road” patient: one who had tried everything previously with no success and shows up on their doorstep. I have been barraged by such patients lately—ones who look at you with hope in their eyes but ready to accept the disappointment they have felt from other providers. Many get better at the waystation of osteopathy, but some do not. How often do I lament “If I had only seen them at the beginning of their journey...”?

Not only does A.T. Still give osteopathic physicians a window into his philosophy with the above quote, he also gives us what is seemingly a premonition about the state of our current health system. He states what he is teaching is to “realize your *right* to health.” In essence, he is implying if we followed his teachings our entire lives—and embodied them for our patients—health would be the inevitable outcome. Unfortunately, many of these patients have often been “meddled” with, surgically and otherwise. Finding the *health* in a patient who lost it along the way can be a difficult task for the osteopathic physician.

Health care rights and access seem to be a foundation of many recent political platforms. With the most recent election, how many candidates built the foundation for support on the establishment of adequate health care both regionally and nationally? Instead of focusing on patient outcomes, many platforms are focused on delivery systems and access to health care. The trends

in hospital systems, however, are focusing on outcomes and patient satisfaction with care.

To that end, A.T. Still seemed to understand that the needs of the patient were at the center of health care, not the needs of the physician, hospital system, or insurance company. Perhaps if we focus on the needs of the patient, as A.T. Still discusses in the quote above, we would realize the right to health he so tenaciously fought for. Osteopathic medicine, with our distinctive philosophy and hands on health care, is perfectly positioned for the physician of the future, outcomes-focused and patient satisfaction worthy.

Regardless if the patient improves when they land in your office as mine had, having seen 5 other physicians, physical therapy and adjunctive therapy, and an armful of medications, they leave feeling they have been heard, attended to, and generally satisfied due to the unique approach of the osteopathic physician.

Perhaps the *rights* of the patient in A.T. Still’s patient-centric vision of the future of health care can guide and formulate the physician of the future. Perhaps, working on the side of the patient, aligned with their anatomy and health, rather than in opposition to it, our vision for the future can be a healthy one and we can realize what we truly are meant to be as both a physician and for our patients.

In gratitude,

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Reference

1. Still AT. *Autobiography of A.T. Still*. Kirksville, MO: A.T. Still; 1897:228. ■