

REAPING WHAT WE SOW

PROMINENT RESEARCHERS REFLECT ON WHAT OREF SUPPORT HELPED THEM ACCOMPLISH

In 1986, when I received my OREF Career Development Award, I was an assistant professor in a Level 1 Trauma Center attempting to budget my time between a fairly substantial clinical orthopaedic trauma load and an academic career. I was given a small (200 square feet) laboratory and a part-time technician.



▲ Thomas A. Einhorn, M.D.

By collaborating with interested faculty in a Department of Biochemistry, I was able to develop sufficient preliminary data to write the grant that OREF funded. This grant then launched my academic career in ways that would not have been possible without it. **I was able to acquire the necessary equipment to perform research at a level of sophistication that would support truly meaningful studies and to hire a full-time technician with the appropriate background to conduct studies at this level of sophistication. Within 3 years, I was able to write my first NIH grant and this grant was awarded as an RO1.** I consider the OREF Career Development Award to be an extremely successful mechanism for initiating clinician scientist careers and I believe that without it, I would not have been able to accomplish the work that my collaborators and I have been able to do in orthopaedic research. In 2004, I was awarded an NIH Program Project Grant, which I now consider to be the culmination of my clinician scientist career. This, too, I relate back to the head start I was given by OREF. I sincerely hope that OREF funding will increase in the future so that more individuals can benefit from the kind of support I received.



Stuart L. Weinstein, M.D. ▲

The treatment of any condition is aimed at altering an otherwise adverse natural history of that condition. Without natural history data, intelligent decisions referable to treatment can't be made. In 1992, I received an OREF grant to study the long-term natural history follow-up of patients with

untreated adolescent idiopathic scoliosis. The results of this study were published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. **This study allowed us to present a 50-year follow-up of untreated patients who had adolescent idiopathic scoliosis. It gives physicians treating scoliosis a better idea of the effect of adolescent idiopathic scoliosis on survival, pulmonary function, back pain, and curve progression.** Clinical research on fundamental problems such as natural history and long-term follow-up of conditions is very expensive and funding sources are few and far between. The funding for this particular project would have been unavailable from any other source and I am grateful to OREF for funding this endeavor and providing orthopaedic surgeons worldwide the fundamental information about the natural history of adolescent idiopathic scoliosis required to make sound treatment decisions. This preliminary work gave us the baseline data to allow us to successfully compete for an NIH RO1 grant dealing with scoliosis treatment.