



▲ Cathleen L. Raggio, MD

A FINE BALANCE I:

CURIOSITY AND PATIENT OUTCOMES
DRIVE ORTHOPAEDISTS TO JUGGLE
CLINICAL CARE WITH RESEARCH



Cathleen L. Raggio, MD will never forget the 2-year-old girl who came to her office years ago. Her scoliosis was so severe, Dr. Raggio thought for an instant she was carrying a small football under her coat.

Treatment meant the child had to endure traction, an intensive surgery and more traction. Now a teenager, the girl is completely healed, and Dr. Raggio still has her photograph. The photo serves as a reminder of why she chose to be both a pediatric orthopaedic surgeon and a researcher.

"She was one of the first patients who got me [thinking], we have got to find a cure for this. There is no 2-year-old who should have to endure everything this young lady went through."

Treating patients and conducting research has been a natural partnership for Dr. Raggio ever since she began residency at Hospital for Special Surgery, New York. She said she entered pediatric orthopaedics because she enjoyed providing continuity of care as her patients matured. Research addressed her scientific curiosity about the root causes of conditions such as scoliosis, she said.

"I love the technical challenges of the operating room, but I need more," she said. "I really need to be able to understand what I'm taking care of."

This determination led Dr. Raggio to a fruitful collaboration with colleague **Philip F. Giampietro, MD, PhD** on the link between chromosome 12 and adolescent idiopathic scoliosis. In 2007, the pair received an OREF Research Grant that allowed them to expand their research to 700 families. The OREF support was priceless, Dr. Raggio said, because the well-respected grant led to additional funding that supports their ongoing efforts to narrow down the specific role chromosome 12 plays in scoliosis.

Dr. Raggio envisions a day when orthopaedists understand what causes scoliosis. She hopes they can more accurately predict which treatments will work best, and perhaps even stop scoliosis before the condition impedes movement.

See page 18 for another profile of a clinician scientist whose work OREF has supported. ■

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Photo courtesy of Hospital for Special Surgery



◀ Joseph A. Abboud, MD

A FINE BALANCE II:

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FINDING EARLY WARNING SIGNS



Joseph A. Abboud, MD dreams of reducing and even predicting tendon disease. He balances his clinical practice treating patients with shoulder and elbow disorders with his passion for research.

Together with his mentor **Louis J. Soslowsky, PhD**, Dr. Abboud received a 2008 OREF Research Grant to explore the correlation between high cholesterol, and tendon composition and biomechanics. He hopes his work will help reduce the extent of tendon damage in patients and clarify the role cholesterol-lowering drugs may play in healing after tendon injury.

Plus, according to Dr. Abboud, orthopaedists may be able to improve the overall health of their patients by identifying high cholesterol before any other signs become apparent and encouraging patients to get screened.

Dr. Abboud said such practical applications to research couldn't have been possible without the support of OREF. If he hadn't received funding, Dr. Abboud predicted, "I probably would have said, 'Okay, well, that was interesting but practically speaking I really can't pursue that question any further.'"

Dr. Abboud's interest in research began during his residency. He noticed a tremendous number of patients who had high cholesterol or took cholesterol-lowering drugs. So, he began searching databases and asking questions. He promised himself that even when he went into private practice at Pennsylvania Hospital, Philadelphia, he would carve out time to conduct research regularly.

"Research is very enjoyable," said Dr. Abboud. "I like the idea that you're able to go out, ask the questions, design studies, answer a question and really make a contribution to our orthopaedic realm."

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