




LIFE
CHIROPRACTIC
COLLEGE
WEST

To: David A. Butters, D.C.

From: Gerard W. Clum, D.C. 

Date: February 25, 2008

Re: Comparison of chiropractic, osteopathic and medical education in terms of degree status, pre-professional education and curriculum length

Dear Dr. Butters,

It is my understanding that you and the Washington State Chiropractic Association would like a brief report on the status of the following information:

1. The classification of degrees in chiropractic, osteopathy and medicine from the perspective of the U.S. Department of Education
 2. A comparison of the requirements for admission to programs in chiropractic, osteopathic and medical education
 3. A comparison of program length among programs in chiropractic, osteopathy and medicine
1. The Doctor of Chiropractic (D.C.) degree, the Doctor of Osteopathy (D.O.) and the Medical Doctor degree (M.D.) are all classified by the United States Department of Education as first professional degrees. Under this classification, such programs have a minimum undergraduate preparation requirement of two academic years of education.
 2. Admission to programs leading to first professional degrees in chiropractic, osteopathy and medicine is comparable in terms of the pre-professional education required by the respective accrediting agency for each degree offering. (The Council on Chiropractic Education, the Commission on Osteopathic College Accreditation and the Council on Medical Education respectively.)

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The minimum admission requirements for each of the programs are as follows:

a. Chiropractic¹

“a. All matriculants must furnish proof of having earned a minimum of 90 semester hour credits of appropriate pre-professional education courses at an institution or institutions accredited by a nationally recognized agency. A national accrediting agency is an agency recognized by the Secretary of the US Department of Education.

b. All matriculants must present a minimum of 48 semester hours' credit (or the quarter-hour credit equivalents), distributed as follows:

English Language Skills*6 semester hours
Psychology.....3 semester hours
Social Sciences or Humanities.....15 semester hours
Biological Sciences**6 semester hours
Chemistry***12 semester hours
Physics and related studies****6 semester hours”

b. Osteopathy²

“5.2.1 The minimum requirement for admission to a COM must be no less than 75 percent of the credits needed for a baccalaureate degree from a college or university accredited by an agency recognized by the United States Department of Education. *Guidelines: The COM should document alternative educational experiences that they will accept for admission.*”

c. Medicine³

“1. Premedical Requirements

MS-1 Students preparing to study medicine should acquire a broad education, including the humanities and social sciences. Ordinarily, four years of undergraduate education are necessary to prepare for entrance into medical school;

¹ Standards for Doctor of Chiropractic Programs and Requirements for Institutional Status January 2007

² Accreditation of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine: COM Accreditation Standards and Procedures

³ Standards for Accreditation of Medical Education Programs Leading to the M.D. Degree

however, special programs (e.g., combined baccalaureate-M.D. programs) may allow this to be reduced. General education that includes the social sciences, history, arts, and languages is increasingly important for the development of physician competencies outside of the scientific knowledge domain.” (Emphasis added)

It is clear that all three disciplines meet the expected federal standard. Chiropractic has a minimum educational background of 90 semester units and osteopathy requires 75% of a baccalaureate degree. These requirements are essentially the same as a baccalaureate degree usually requires 120 semester hours. Medicine expresses a four year requirement as that which is “ordinarily” required. Medicine also provides for programs where a student completes three years of undergraduate study and then transfers to a professional program. This thereby causes the requirements of all three disciplines to reflect a similar if not the same extent of undergraduate education.

3. Program lengths for chiropractic, osteopathy and medicine are also comparable, generally four academic years representing at least 130 weeks of instruction.

- a. Chiropractic

- C. Required DCP Curriculum Characteristics

1. Instructional Hours

The DCP must require each student awarded the D.C. degree to have successfully completed not less than 4,200 instructional hours, and must have earned not less than the final 25% of the total credits required for the D.C. degree from the program that confers the degree.

2. Curriculum

The curriculum required for the DCP must include the following subjects (not necessarily in individual courses for each subject): anatomy; biochemistry; physiology; microbiology; pathology; public health; physical, clinical and laboratory diagnosis; gynecology; obstetrics; pediatrics; geriatrics; dermatology; otolaryngology; diagnostic imaging procedures; psychology; nutrition/dietetics; biomechanics; orthopedics; neurology; first aid and emergency procedures; spinal analysis; principles and practice of chiropractic; clinical decision making; adjustive techniques; research methods and procedures; and professional practice ethics.

b. Osteopathy

6.1 The COM must develop and implement curricula designed to achieve its mission and objectives.

Guideline: The education should at least include, but not be limited to, the following areas of biomedical sciences and disciplines related to osteopathic medicine: principles, history and practice of osteopathic medicine, human anatomy, biochemistry, pharmacology, genetics, physiology, pathology, microbiology, physical and differential diagnosis, medical ethics and legal aspects of medicine; internal medicine, family medicine, pediatrics, geriatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, preventive medicine and public health, psychiatry, surgery, radiology.

A COM can implement their curriculum utilizing different curriculum models. Two organizational models used most frequently by osteopathic medical schools are discipline-based and system based medicine, or a combination of both. Curricula delivery can also vary, but the most frequently used models are: lecture-discussion, problem based, and independent study.

6.1.1 The minimum length of the osteopathic medical curricula must be at least four academic years or its equivalent as demonstrated to the COCA.

Guideline: The curriculum should provide at least 130 weeks of instruction.

c. Medicine

1. General Design. The program of medical education leading to the M.D. degree must include at least 130 weeks of instruction.

Again, it is clear that the three first professional degrees being considered all require a four-year curriculum representing a minimum of 130 weeks of instruction.

I trust that this is the information you are seeking. If further information or clarification is needed, please do not hesitate to call on me.