

Chiropractors and Medical Doctors: a Comparison February, 2018 By Dr.

Derek Conte

A question comes up every once in a while regarding the educational differences between chiropractors (DC's) and medical doctors (MD's) in terms of basic training, classroom hours and board testing to gain licensure after graduation. The answer may surprise some. In both cases it is a long academic road requiring four years of college, pre-med classes (biology, chemistry, organic chemistry and physics), followed by four years of professional chiropractic or medical schooling. This amounts to many thousands of classroom, laboratory and clinical hours, not to mention study time.

One may successfully graduate from chiropractic or medical school and rightfully be called "doctor", but unless that doctor passes all national board exams successfully they cannot practice their arts on the public in the USA.

The basic education of DC's and MD's is virtually the same in terms of classroom hours and subjects, but varies significantly in the amount of hours dedicated to the various subjects within the separate educations:

Degree Requirements*

"These basic educational requirements for graduates of both chiropractic and medical schools show that although each has its own specialties, the hours of classroom instruction are about the same. The class hours for basic science comparisons were compiled and averaged following a review of curricula of 18 chiropractic colleges and 22 medical schools."

Minimum Required Hours*

Chiropractic College		Medical School
456	Anatomy/Embryology.	215
243	Physiology	174
296	Pathology	507
161	Chemistry/Biochemistry	100
145	Microbiology	145
408	Diagnosis	113
149	Neurology	171
56	Psychology/Psychiatry	323
66	Obstetrics & Gynecology	284
271	X-ray	13
168	Orthopedics	2

*taken from: The Grisanti Report

The weighting of the charts reflect the different focus of the disciplines. DC's focus on anatomy, physiology, neurology, orthopedics, biomechanics and radiology, while MD's focus on pathology, chemistry, obstetrics, gynecology, psychiatry/psychology and surgery. Though DC's receive as much or more diagnosis in school, MD's continue diagnostics during their 3-year hospital residency after school. A surgery would add more years to that. DC's complete their clinical training while in school.

Following professional school, DC's take a four-part national board exam (NBCE's) over 2 years and state boards to become licensed, while MD's take the COMLEX or USMLE to become licensed. Beyond that, board certifications in specialties for DC's and MD's are also possible.

So, why the big differences in educational focus? The answer is in the philosophical differences of the two. MD's operate on the idea that if the body is lacking something chemically, it will help the patient to provide it for them exogenously, through medication. Some of these medications extend and save lives. MD's are authorized to prescribe drugs. DC's are not. Additionally, MD's perform emergency and planned surgery. Many MD's become specialists who care for specific areas of the body and their pathologies.

While Chiropractors understand pathological processes and can recognize disease, they do not "treat" disease per se. They operate on the holistic idea that the body can heal itself; that all the necessary chemicals are already inside the body waiting to be released by correction of nerve dysfunction. This is why DC's do specific adjustments to the spine, correlating organic and somatic problems with the associated spinal region or vertebra. They advocate a healthy lifestyle to make the body better able to resist illness and disease in the first place. Of course, MD's understand well the importance of a healthy lifestyle! While this may be an oversimplification, these are the essential differences.

DC's regularly refer patients to MD's who specialize in internal medicine, to orthopedists, and to neurologists for further evaluation and care, if needed. Likewise, these same MD's will refer to a good DC if they feel surgical or other intervention is not required. I am happy to say this trust between MD's and DC's is growing rapidly to the benefit of all communities. Despite our differences in methods, we serve the same overall objective: to help the public.

Dr. Derek Conte is co-founder of Chiropractic Specialists at 1154 Concord Road in Smyrna. For questions, call: 404-784-6008. For more articles, FAQ's, photos and info, visit: drderekconte.com