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Title: Simplifying the Interconnected Alphabet Soup of Medical Education

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As the training of physicians is a continuum, the organizations providing training, oversight, licensing, and accreditation are interconnected. Their acronyms create an alphabet soup of medical education. This infographic depicts these organizations. The acronyms of the organization, description of the organization, and the formal interactions are provided. Information about these organizations has been largely obtained directly from the organizations’ websites. Memberships of the boards of the organizations overlap; these and other relationships are not depicted.

• Premedical students take the Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT) and apply to MD schools through the American Medical College Application Service (AMCAS), which are owned and run by the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC), or apply to DO schools through the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine Application Services (AACOMAS) run by the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM).

• MD education programs are accredited by the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME), which is co-sponsored by the American Medical Association (AMA) and the AAMC. The DO education programs are accredited by the Commission on Osteopathic College Accreditation (COCA), part of the American Osteopathic Association (AOA). Both LCME and COCA are recognized by the United States Department of Education (USDOE).

• In order to practice medicine in the United States, MD medical students and residents take the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE), which is co-owned by the National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME) and the Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB). DO students and residents take the Comprehensive Osteopathic Medical Licensing Examination of the United States (COMLEX-USA) administered by the National Board of Osteopathic Medical Examiners (NBOME) and can take the USLME.

• MD and DO students apply to residency through the Electronic Residency Application Service (ERAS) and rank order the programs of their choice through the National Residency Matching Program (NRMP), match, and then enter residency. Residency programs and sponsoring institutions are accredited through the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME).

• Both MD and DO residents and practicing physicians are licensed by medical licensing boards supported by the Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB).

• Many physicians are board certified. Boards collaborate with the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) or the American Osteopathic Association Bureau of Osteopathic Specialties (AOABOS).

• The Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) and the Council on Osteopathic Continuing Medical Education (COCME) of the AOA have oversight over much of continuing education efforts.