

Chiropractic Education Requirements

Educational requirements for doctors of chiropractic are among the most stringent of any of the health care professions.

The typical applicant at a chiropractic college has already acquired nearly four years of pre-medical undergraduate college education, including courses in biology, inorganic and organic chemistry, physics, psychology and related lab work. Once accepted into an accredited chiropractic college, the requirements become even more demanding — four to five academic years of professional study are the standard. Because of the hands-on nature of chiropractic, and the intricate adjusting techniques, a significant portion of time is spent in clinical training.

Doctors of chiropractic — who are licensed to practice in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and in many nations around the world — undergo a rigorous education in the healing sciences, similar to that of medical doctors. In some areas, such as anatomy, physiology, and rehabilitation, they receive more intensive education than most medical doctors of physical therapists.

Curriculum Requirements For the Doctor of Chiropractic Degree (DC) in comparison to the Doctor of Medicine Degree (MD) and the Doctor of Physical Therapy Degree (DPT) ^{1,2}

	Average Program Length	Average Classroom and Clinical Study Hours Prior to Graduation*	Advanced Certification Available
Chiropractic Curriculum	4 years	4,820	Yes
Medical Curriculum	4 years	4,670	Yes
Physical Therapy Curriculum	3 years	3,398	Yes

* Does not include hours attributed to post-graduation residency programs.

Like other primary health care doctors, chiropractic students spend a significant portion of their curriculum studying clinical subjects related to evaluating and caring for patients. Typically, as part of their professional training, they must complete a minimum of a one-year clinical-based program dealing with actual patient care. In total, the curriculum includes a minimum of 4,200 hours of classroom, laboratory and clinical experience. The course of study is approved by an accrediting agency which is fully recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. This has been the case for more than 25 years.

Before they are allowed to practice, doctors of chiropractic must pass national board examinations and become state-licensed. Chiropractic colleges also offer post-graduate continuing education programs in specialty fields ranging from sports injuries and occupational health to orthopedics and neurology. These programs allow chiropractors to specialize in a healthcare discipline or meet state re-licensure requirements.

This extensive education prepares doctors of chiropractic to diagnose health care problems, treat the problems when they are within their scope of practice and refer patients to other health care practitioners when appropriate.

Sources:

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