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The first step to strengthening graduate level osteopathic education: a national review

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To the Editor,

One in four medical students are studying to become DOs [1, 2]. This compelling statistic demonstrates that the osteopathic philosophy resonates strongly with many of our nation's future physicians. It also makes our work more urgent. The osteopathic medical education (OME) community must ensure that today's growing number of osteopathic medical students can continue to choose DO as they become the residents and practicing physicians of tomorrow.

Osteopathic Recognition has not grown as anticipated as part of single GME accreditation

Prior to the transition to the single graduate medical education (GME) accreditation system, there were 1,200 osteopathic programs in 71 specialties and subspecialties. As of February 17, 2023, only 253 programs across 26 specialties and subspecialties [3] (including transitional year) have achieved Osteopathic Recognition (OR). As *Journal of Osteopathic Medicine* readers likely know, OR is a designation conferred by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education's Osteopathic Recognition Committee upon demonstration, through a formal application process, of a residency program's commitment to teaching and assessing osteopathic principles and practice (OPP) at the GME level.

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Investigating OR adoption trends

Because there has never been a national review of the OR program, the reasons for OR's lower than expected adoption are not well understood. That's why the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine is undertaking a research study [4], funded by the Osteopathic Heritage Foundations and with the support of the well-respected and nationally regarded research capacity of the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, to understand the motivations behind the GME programs that have pursued OR, chosen not to apply for OR and have withdrawn from OR.

The study will examine interest in the continued formal development of OPP after graduation from osteopathic medical school among sponsoring institutions and individual GME programs, and evaluate OR as the sole, long-term solution to ensuring continued formal development of OPP.

Regardless of the study's outcome, without this important baseline of understanding we risk squandering the opportunity we have before us to weave OPP meaningfully throughout all stages of OME. We have the chance to set in motion evidence-based strategies to enhance the 'osteopathic-ness' of education and practice, benefiting learners, practitioners and, most importantly, patients through better care.

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