

Canadian Osteopathic Association

Osteopathic Practice in Canada

Introduction:

Osteopathic Medicine (Osteopathy) has a long history in Canada, with the appearance of the first Canadian DO in 1899. The Ontario Osteopathic Association was chartered in 1901, the Western Canada Osteopathic Association in 1923, and the Canadian Osteopathic Association in 1926.

In Canada, as in the United States, there is no national medical license. Each province is free to establish its own standards for the registration of physicians, and for recognizing the equivalency of foreign-issued diplomas. There has not been full reciprocity of practice rights across the country for Canadian trained M.D.'s, let alone American trained M.D.'s or D.O.'s.

National Medical Organizations of Importance to D.O.'s:

Before reviewing the provincial situation, it is helpful to briefly review those national organizations that are of primary importance to osteopathic physicians in Canada.

1. **Medical Council of Canada (MCC)**
The MCC is primarily responsible for establishing and maintaining a certification process that in theory, should allow inter-provincial reciprocity of accredited physicians. All Canadian medical school graduates complete the two part MCC qualifying examination. In this regard, it has a role similar to the USMLE or COMLEX process. American-trained D.O.'s have had access to the MCC examinations since 1991. MCC certification is a requirement for licensure in many, but not all provinces. Some provinces require that all foreign trained physicians write these examinations, including American trained M.D.'s. The provinces of Quebec, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario, Alberta, and British Columbia all now accept the COMLEX examinations in lieu of the MCC examination for full licensure.
2. **College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC)**
The CFPC is responsible for accrediting family medicine residencies in Canada, and certifying graduates of Canadian family medicine residency programs through an examination process. American-trained D.O.'s have completed family medicine residencies in Canada and achieved CFPC certification (CCFP). At the moment, graduates of American osteopathic medical schools are eligible to apply for family medicine residency programs in the provinces of Ontario and Alberta. Graduates of ACGME accredited family medicine residency programs may also challenge the examinations of the CFPC.

3. Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (RCPSC)
The Royal College has the same role for all other specialists that the CFPC has for family physicians. In 2005 the Royal College granted recognition to the American osteopathic medical degree. At the moment, American trained D.O.'s are eligible to apply for specialty medical residency programs in Alberta and Ontario. The Royal College does not have a role in accrediting non-Canadian residency programs. Whether a specialist applicant requires Royal College certification for practice or other foreign accreditation (eg ACGME or AOA) would be acceptable for registration is a provincial matter as well as the local hospital regulations.

Provincial Review:

In Canada, the role of the State Medical Board is approximated by the provincial "College of Physicians and Surgeons", which is responsible for physician registration and discipline. The standards for physician registration are established by the provincial ministry of health, but with significant influence from the respective provincial College.

From West to East, the provinces are:

British Columbia:

There are two pathways for D.O. registration in British Columbia. The first recognizes the COMLEX examinations and two years of AOA certified post-graduate training. The D.O. has a limited license, and is restricted to a practice of musculoskeletal medicine. This pathway is primarily intended for the D.O. that wishes to establish an OMT focused practice. The second pathway requires completion of the MCC, COMLEX, USMLE, FLEX, or NBME examinations and two years of a ACGME residency program. The D.O. will then receive an unrestricted license.

Alberta:

The D.O. candidate is required to complete the MCC, COMLEX, or USMLE examinations. AOA certified residencies are recognized.

Saskatchewan:

A board exists separate from the provincial College for the registration of D.O.'s, although it has not been active for many years. D.O.'s are registered by the board to practice "osteopathy", although that is not clearly defined.

Manitoba:

As of 2002, American-trained D.O.'s are eligible for registration in Manitoba.

Ontario:

Since 2003, the College of Physicians and Surgeons have recognized the American DO degree as equivalent to that of an American MD. Additionally, the COMLEX examinations are recognized if performed after 2004 when the PE component was introduced with part II. The same criteria apply to the USMLE. ACGME accredited residencies are recognized although AOA accredited residencies are not. Additionally, there is a "Practice Assessment" pathway for applicants with at least five years of clinical practice experience.

Quebec:

American-trained D.O.'s have been eligible for registration in Quebec for approximately 30 years, although the requirement that the candidate pass a French language proficiency examination has had a negative impact. Additionally, the Candidate must complete one year of post-graduate training in the province, although this can be at the fellowship level. COMLEX examinations are accepted. MCC certification and Royal college certification are not necessary. Unfortunately, the title protection that exists for M.D.'s does not exist for D.O.'s with the result that the title use is not restricted in that province.

New Brunswick:

D.O.'s are eligible for full registration in New Brunswick. One pathway extends reciprocity to a D.O. with Maine licensure. COMLEX examinations are accepted.

Nova Scotia:

As of 2002, full registration for D.O.'s is extended in the same way as for an American trained M.D. COMLEX examinations are accepted.

Prince Edward Island:

At the moment, PEI is the only Canadian province without a current or anticipated registration pathway for American-trained Osteopathic physicians.

Newfoundland:

As of 2002, the College has committed itself to seeing that the government establishes a registration pathway for American-trained D.O.'s, although it is anticipated that this may take a couple of years.

Territories (Yukon, Northwest, Nunavut):

In most instances, the Territories will grant registration to any physician that qualifies for licensure in any other province.

Armed Services:

American-trained D.O.'s are eligible for service with the Canadian Armed Services, including scholarship opportunities, recruitment bonuses.

Disclaimer:

The information presented in this summary does not necessarily reflect the details of current registration requirements in any province. These requirements change with time, and full understanding of the current requirements require communication with the office of the Registrar of the College of Physicians and Surgeons for the province(s) of interest.