

DO and MD licensing exams should be viewed equally, says AMA

NOV 14, 2018

Brendan Murphy

Senior News Writer

The Comprehensive Osteopathic Medical Licensing Examination (COMLEX) is required for graduation with a doctor of osteopathic medicine (DO) degree.

But some residency program directors are requiring the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE)—typically taken by students earning doctor of medicine (MD) degrees—for all applicants, including DOs. That rigid stance creates added strain on DO applicants, especially in the era of a single graduate medical education accreditation system.

The AMA House of Delegates (HOD) addressed the issue at the 2018 AMA Interim Meeting in National Harbor, Maryland, in an effort to encourage residency program directors to better understand and use COMLEX scores.

While acknowledging existing AMA policy stating that residency program directors must not use licensure examination scores as a screening criterion for residency selection, the HOD adopted new policy calling for the AMA to promote equal acceptance of the USMLE and COMLEX at all U.S. residency programs.

Delegates also directed the AMA to:

- Work with appropriate stakeholders—including the National Board of Medical Examiners, Association of American Medical Colleges, National Board of Osteopathic Medical Examiners, Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education and American Osteopathic Association—to educate residency program directors on how to interpret and use COMLEX scores.
- Work with residency program directors to promote higher COMLEX use with residency program matches in light of the new single accreditation system.