

**International Association of Medical Regulatory Authorities
Members General Assembly
November 8, 2023**

Subject: Recognition of Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons

Introduced by: The Federation of State Medical Boards (United States) and the Oregon Medical Board (United States)

Whereas, the foundations of osteopathic philosophy were first articulated in the United States in 1874 by Andrew Taylor Still, M.D., and there are now 40 colleges or schools of “osteopathic medicine” in the United States, at 64 teaching locations in 35 states, that confer the D.O. (doctor of osteopathic medicine) degree; and

Whereas, physicians who possess a D.O. (doctor of osteopathic medicine) degree in the United States undergo rigorous medical education and training that includes four years of medical school (at a college or school of osteopathic medicine that is accredited under a process with deemed authority by the U.S. Department of Education) after the completion of a baccalaureate degree, followed by three to seven years of postgraduate residency training in one or more of 48 specialties and subspecialties of medicine and surgery, in residency training programs approved by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME), which oversees the postgraduate training in the United States of all physicians with an M.D. (doctor of medicine) or D.O. (doctor of osteopathic medicine) degree; and

Whereas, there are only two types of fully licensed physicians in the United States, those with an M.D. degree and those with a D.O. degree, with both branches of medicine recognized and acknowledged by the U.S. government and by every U.S. state and local government and the District of Columbia for the complete scope and practice of medicine and surgery; and

Whereas, a number of colleges or schools of “osteopathy” also exist in countries such as the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Australia and New Zealand; and

Whereas, in the last 100 years, different legal and regulatory structures around the world have split practitioners of osteopathic philosophy into two professional streams: “osteopathic physicians and surgeons,” who are doctors with full, unlimited medical practice rights equivalent to physicians with an M.D. (doctor of medicine) degree, and who specialize in traditional branches or specialties of medicine or surgery; and “osteopaths,” who are considered primary contact health providers but have limited practice rights and do not prescribe pharmaceuticals, perform surgery, or complete various other functions of a fully licensed physician; and

Whereas, the Osteopathic International Alliance (which is recognized by, and in official relations with, the World Health Organization) reported in 2020 that there are 196,861 health care practitioners around the world who deliver osteopathic health care, of whom 117,559 (the vast majority in the United States) are “osteopathic physicians and surgeons” with medical licenses or registrations in the United States and 56 other countries; and 79,302 are “osteopaths” statutorily regulated and registered in 13 countries; and

Whereas, the International Labour Organization (ILO), an agency of the United Nations that brings together governments, employers and workers from 187 nations to “set standards, develop policies and devise programmes promoting decent work for all women and men,” has stated that U.S.-trained doctors of osteopathic medicine are “fully licensed physicians and represent a distinct occupation from osteopaths, who are not recognized as physicians;” and

Whereas, the Association of Medical Councils of Africa (AMCOA), whose member councils and health ministries are members or partner organizations of IAMRA, voted in 2019 at a meeting of its Management Committee to support a resolution that “a U.S.-trained D.O. would be recognised and registered in the same manner as a U.S.-trained M.D. across member regulatory authorities and health ministries;”

And whereas, distinguishing “osteopathic physicians and surgeons” from “osteopaths” helps to prevent confusion among patients, healthcare providers, and regulatory bodies regarding their scope of practice and respective qualifications;

Therefore, be it hereby

Resolved, that IAMRA recognizes that “osteopathic physicians and surgeons” who are licensed by an appropriate statutory regulatory body for the unlimited practice of medicine and surgery are equivalent to those physicians and surgeons who possess an M.D. (doctor of medicine) degree; and

Resolved, that IAMRA recognizes that “osteopathic physicians and surgeons” are distinct from health professionals more commonly referred to as “osteopaths,” who may be licensed or registered by an appropriate statutory regulatory body but are not trained in the complete scope and practice of physicians and surgeons.

Adopted by the board of directors of the Oregon Medical Board on July 11, 2023.