

## Survey Results: Appeal of ACGME-accredited Programs with Osteopathic Recognition among Third Year Osteopathic Medical Students

May 2015

Within the single graduate medical education (GME) accreditation system (SAS), all GME programs accredited by the American Osteopathic Association (AOA) can apply for accreditation by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME). To maintain and be recognized for their osteopathic focus, these programs can choose to apply for “osteopathic recognition” within the SAS. Additionally, in order to be recognized for any changes in their osteopathic orientation, current (allopathic) ACGME-accredited programs may also choose to apply for osteopathic recognition. Osteopathic recognition is a key mechanism by which osteopathic principles and practices (OPP) are integrated into the new accreditation system.

As program and institutional leaders consider osteopathic recognition for their programs, information on student demand for residency and fellowship programs with an osteopathic focus, may better inform their decision-making process.

To that end, in March 2015, the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM) conducted a poll of current third year osteopathic medical students at colleges of osteopathic medicine (COM). The goal of the survey was to determine if COM students were interested in pursuing GME programs with osteopathic recognition within the SAS.

### Background

Over the past few years, just under 50 percent of Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (DO) graduates seek AOA-accredited graduate medical education (GME)<sup>1</sup>; the remainder have chosen to pursue ACGME-accredited residencies. AACOM’s annual graduating student survey demonstrates that dually-accredited programs and ACGME residencies are preferred by some DO students for the following reasons<sup>2</sup>:

1. Opens more career opportunities (62 percent)
2. Located in more suitable geographic location(s) (71 percent)
3. Located in larger institutions (61 percent)
4. Believe better training and educational opportunities available (64 percent)
5. Desired specialty training not available in osteopathic programs (27 percent)
6. Better chance of being accepted in program (14 percent)

7. Allows ABMS board certification (15 percent)
8. Higher pay (12 percent)
9. Shorter training period (5 percent)
10. Obligation (1 percent)
11. Other (9 percent)

In developing this survey on the appeal of osteopathic recognition, past research on osteopathic medical students provided insight on their inclination for programs with an osteopathic focus. In a survey of osteopathic medical school graduates in 2002-03, 72 percent indicated that dually-accredited residency programs were *more appealing* than programs accredited only by the ACGME.<sup>3</sup> This data point provides some evidence that DO graduates may prefer ACGME-accredited programs with some osteopathic emphasis. This may be particularly true if the particular program already fulfills their top reasons (as above) for choosing an ACGME-accredited or dually-accredited program, e.g. more career opportunities, location.

Given the probable reasons why some DO graduates prefer ACGME-accredited programs and as the SAS is implemented, would DO graduates prefer ACGME-accredited programs with osteopathic recognition? Would the designation of “osteopathic recognition” be important in how they rank GME programs?

### **About Osteopathic Recognition**

The ACGME’s Osteopathic Principles Committee (OPC) defines osteopathic recognition as the following:

*“Osteopathic recognition is conferred upon any ACGME-accredited graduate medical education program providing requisite training in osteopathic principles and practice after appropriate application and review for adherence to established requirements”.*<sup>4</sup>

Programs seeking osteopathic recognition will be reviewed by the OPC to assess their compliance with the requirements for Osteopathic Recognition. Although programs can apply for osteopathic recognition, it is not required for accreditation.

### **Data**

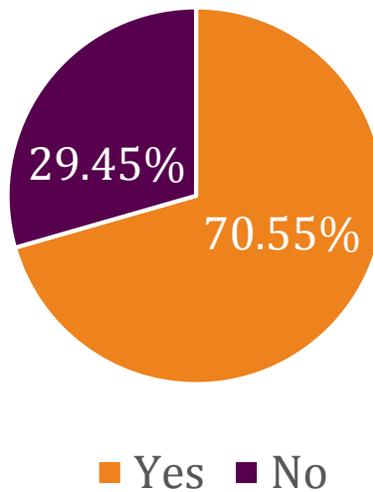
The survey resulted in a representative sample, responses were posted by 947 individuals, representing approximately 17 percent of the enrollment of third year students at AACOM member colleges. All students denote the COM attended. Responses were received for 28 colleges, which represents 66.60 percent of AACOM’s member colleges and sites. Response rates by COM varied from a high of 58.40 percent to a low of less than one percent (0.37).

All responses were from third year students except for one institution that did not have third year students in their cohort, so responses are from students in other classes. The survey was conducted in cooperation with AACOM’s Board of Deans who distributed the survey to their third-year students.

**The findings**

Students convey overwhelming interest for ACGME-accredited programs with osteopathic recognition, with **70.55 percent** indicating that a program with osteopathic recognition has greater appeal to them than an ACGME-accredited program without osteopathic recognition.

**Figure 1. Would an ACGME-accredited program with osteopathic recognition be more appealing to you than an ACGME-accredited program without osteopathic recognition?**

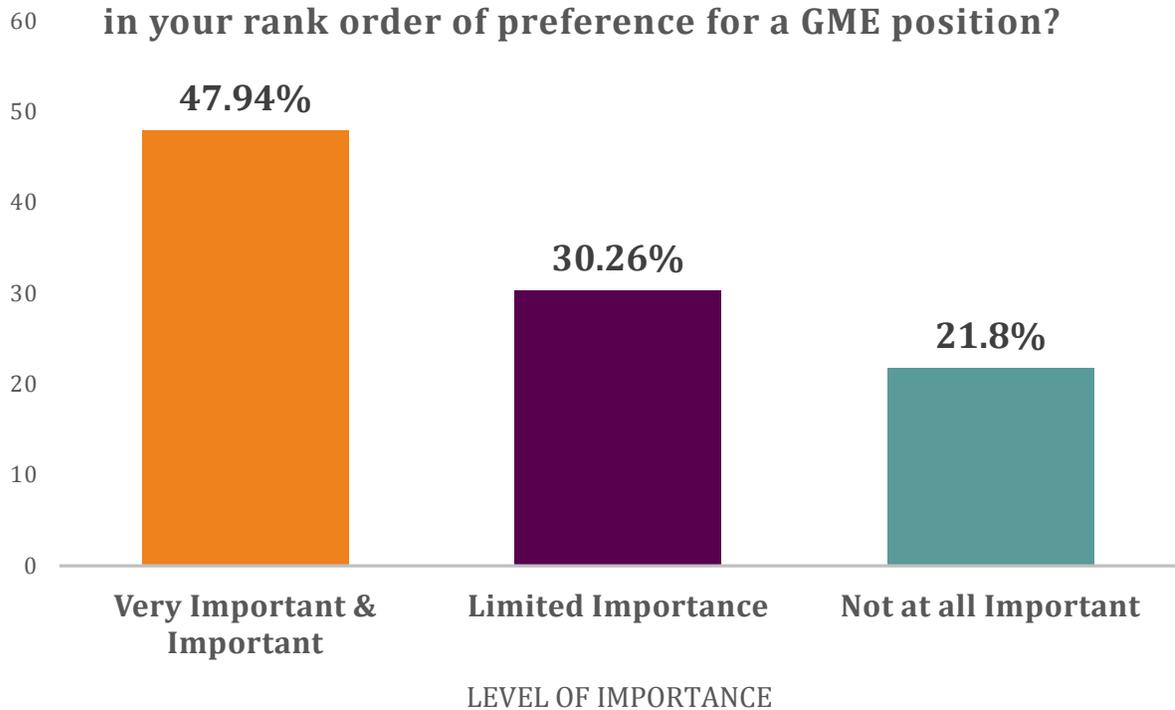


<b>Table 1. Would an ACGME-accredited program with osteopathic recognition be more appealing to you than an ACGME-accredited program without osteopathic recognition?</b>		
	N	%
Yes	666	70.55
No	278	29.45
No response	3	
Total	947	100

In addition, **78.20 percent** of students specify that osteopathic recognition has some level of importance in how they may choose to rank programs in order of preference for a GME position. Nearly 48 percent suggest that osteopathic recognition is of considerable importance in how they will make this decision. Only 21.80 percent feel that osteopathic recognition is “Not at all Important” in their decision making.

<b>Table 2. How strongly does Osteopathic Recognition of an ACGME-accredited program influence its place in your rank order of preference for a GME position?</b>		
	N	%
Very Important	182	19.26
Important	271	28.68
Limited Importance	286	30.26
Not at all Important	206	21.80
No response	2	
Total	947	100

**Figure 2. How strongly does Osteopathic Recognition of an ACGME-accredited program influence its place in your rank order of preference for a GME position?**



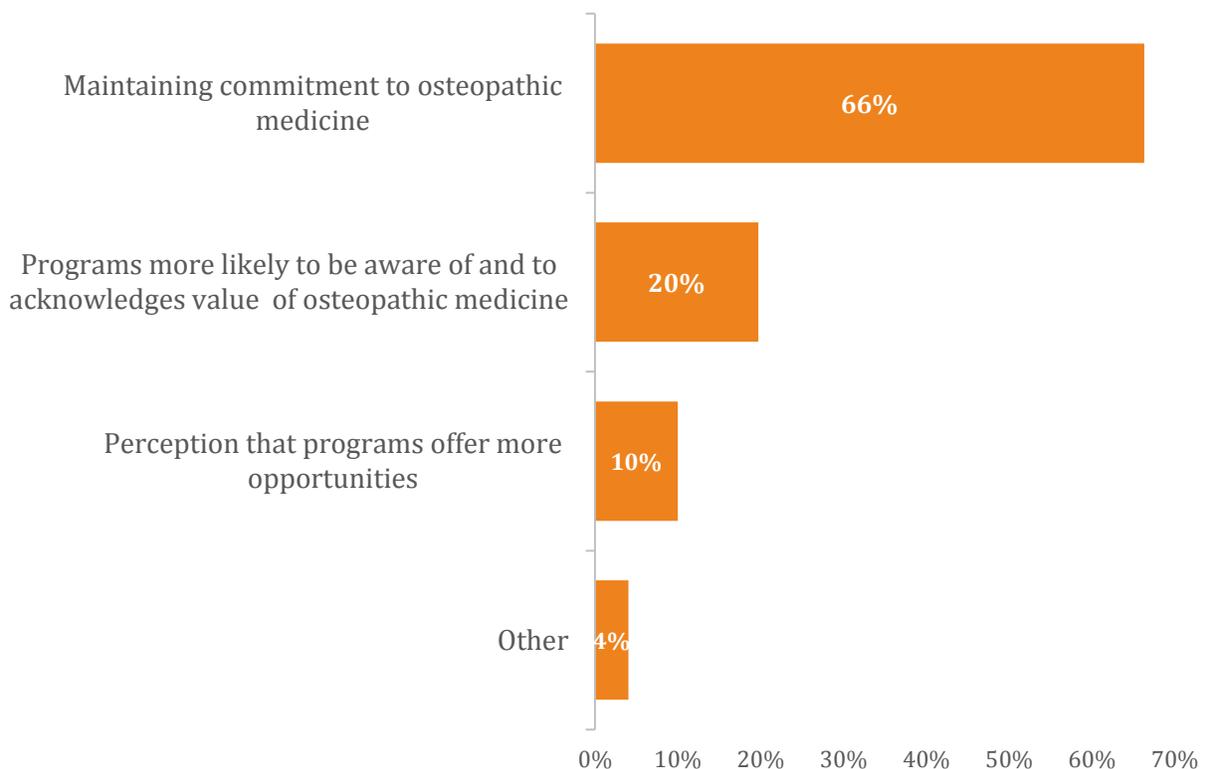
### Reasons for choosing ACGME-accredited programs with osteopathic recognition

Both questions of the survey allowed students to provide an explanation for their given response. These reveal instructive information on the key drivers for DO students when applying for GME programs.

The primary cited reasons for selecting a program with osteopathic recognition organized into three main categories are:

1. To maintain their commitment to osteopathic medicine and the osteopathic profession.
2. The perception of greater awareness of osteopathic medicine among programs with osteopathic recognition and also greater likelihood of these programs to be more “DO friendly”.
3. The view that these programs offer more opportunities.

**Figure 3. Reasons for preferring ACGME program with osteopathic recognition**



Within these three main categories are 10 subcategories for the most commonly cited reasons for choosing programs with osteopathic recognition (see Appendix 1. for selected comments):

1. Strong desire to utilize and build on their OPP and Osteopathic Manipulative Treatment (OMT) skills while in residency (n=138).
2. Commitment to their initial reason(s) for attending a college of osteopathic medicine (n=41).
3. Interest in employing OMT in their future practice through additional training (n=39).
4. Belief that osteopathic medicine is beneficial to patient care (n=32).
5. Perception that programs with osteopathic recognition are likely to be more “DO friendly” and receptive to accepting DO students (n=32).
6. Recognition and acclaim for the value of osteopathic medicine and of the unique skill sets DO students possess (n=28).
7. Desire to practice in an environment that appreciates the osteopathic approach to practice, allowing residents to treat patients using OMT (n=13).
8. Access to a broader array of fellowship programs as well as gaining eligibility for ONMM fellowships (n=9).
9. Interest in current allopathic, ACGME-accredited programs that would choose to seek osteopathic recognition (n=8).
10. Presents a “best of both worlds” scenario (n=8).

While several students who report that osteopathic recognition is “Very Important”, also indicate that they are likely to apply *only* to programs with osteopathic recognition, students who feel that osteopathic recognition is “Important” acknowledge other important considerations, such as location. However, they also specify that “all things being equal”, they prefer programs with osteopathic recognition.

Some students who respond “NO” to whether they find an ACGME program with osteopathic recognition more appealing, also offer explanations that signal their inclination for programs with osteopathic recognition—if location and specialty choice were not an issue. Majority of the reasons given for those who report that osteopathic recognition is of “Limited Importance” imply that if programs met their location and specialty choice considerations, these students would likely prefer programs with osteopathic recognition.

## **Conclusion**

As the transition to the SAS moves forward, designation of programs with “osteopathic recognition” status is an important signal to osteopathic medical students determining their residency training options. The survey results show that a vast majority of osteopathic medical students would prefer ACGME-accredited programs with osteopathic recognition over those without this status. In their explanations, osteopathic medical students convey strong commitment to their chosen pathway to becoming a physician. These students seek to continue building and utilizing the OPP skills taught to them in undergraduate medical education. Students perceive that programs with osteopathic recognition are more likely to be “DO friendly”, have greater appreciation for the value of osteopathic medicine and be more open to the use of OMT in patient care. Finally, some students reveal enthusiasm for these programs and perceive that they may offer more career opportunities, access to fellowships and provide a “win-win” scenario for the next phase of their training.

Questions about the survey or this report may be directed to Tom Levitan, [tlevitan@aacom.org](mailto:tlevitan@aacom.org) or Alegneta Long, [along@aacom.org](mailto:along@aacom.org).

**Appendix 1. Selected quotes by category**

Categories	Selected Quotes
<b>To maintain their commitment to osteopathic medicine and the osteopathic profession</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I would like to keep my commitment to the osteopathic profession and principles.”</li> </ul>
<b>Respondents strongly desire utilizing and building on their OMT and OPP skills in residency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I would like to continue to develop my OMM / OMT skills during residency and understand how to incorporate them into clinical practice.”</li> <li>• “Continued education and training in OMM is essential to me. It is a valid healing modality that I believe and desire advanced training in.”</li> </ul>
<b>Commitment to primary reasons for attending college of osteopathic medicine</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I chose to apply only to osteopathic medical schools for a reason; I like the approach to a patient and the OMT. I'd like to continue with that focus into my residency as well.”</li> </ul>
<b>Desire to use OMT in their future practice and want to be comfortable using OMT through residency training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I feel that if I don't choose a residency that has osteopathic training available, I won't feel comfortable using OMT in practice without a large investment of time and energy on my part. I know I will have lots of other things on my plate during residency, so quite honestly, I'm not sure I will be able to make that investment”</li> </ul>
<b>Belief that osteopathic medicine is beneficial to patients</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Because I believe the osteopathic philosophy is a great approach to healthcare and results in better well-being of the patient”</li> <li>• “OMM and the tenets of osteopathy are extremely relevant to almost all fields of medicine, and result in better patient care and outcomes. We should integrate it into regular practice as often as possible.”</li> </ul>
<b>Perception that programs with osteopathic recognition are likely to be more DO friendly and receptive to accepting DO students</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I strongly believe in osteopathic philosophy and practice, but due to availabilities for my chosen specialty and locations, I am only applying to ACGME programs. I am strongly and carefully choosing DO-friendly ACGME programs. Osteopathic recognition would make that distinction much clearer and easier to navigate.”</li> </ul>
<b>Added recognition and acclaim of the value of osteopathic medicine and the unique skill sets of a resident trained in OPP</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I will graduate with a degree in osteopathic medicine. I feel I have a different set of tools to offer compared to my MD colleagues that have their own specific set of skills that slightly alter the way they practice medicine. I would like my skill set to be recognized.”</li> </ul>

**Appendix 1. Selected quotes by category**

Categories	Selected Quotes
<p><b>Desire to practice in an environment that appreciates the osteopathic approach to practice, allowing residents to treat patients using OMT and programs that are aware of its benefits</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I would know the residency is comfortable allowing DO residents the ability to practice OMM, teach OMM to allopathic counterparts and has OMM training integrated in the residency program.”</li> <li>• “It would be nice to have the value of OMT acknowledged from the organization, which would help justify spending time on OMT on patients where appropriate. Further training on some level would be beneficial to all residents in the program.”</li> </ul>
<p><b>Access to broader array of fellowship programs as well as eligibility for ONMM fellowship</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Broader recognition, opportunities for fellowship”</li> <li>• “More research opportunities, more fellowship training opportunities”</li> </ul>
<p><b>Interest in current ACGME-accredited programs that would choose to seek osteopathic recognition</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Osteopathic recognition would make it more likely for me to look at an ACGME program, but I plan to only apply to AOA-accredited programs. I do not wish to go to an ACGME-accredited program because I would like a program that has both Osteopathic Philosophy taught in the program and Osteopathic Manipulative Medicine training”</li> </ul>
<p><b>The view that these programs offer more opportunities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I am currently interested in pursuing a specialty that has a VERY limited amount of osteopathic residencies available; therefore am also preparing to apply for ACGME residency programs. I would love to match into an osteopathic residency, because I am very proud of the ideals and training that I have received as a student at an osteopathic medical institution. If it turned out that I didn't get a spot in an osteopathic residency, I would definitely be more prone to seek an ACGME-accredited program with Osteopathic Recognition.”</li> </ul>
<p><b>Presents a “best of both worlds” scenario</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “ACGME with osteopathic recognition is win-win”</li> <li>• “ACGME-accredited programs seem to offer more opportunities (esp. for fellowship training) and at bigger institutions. However, I don't want to just go ACGME and give up my osteopathic training as this is why I chose DO over MD in the first place. Programs with osteopathic recognition would theoretically offer the best of both worlds.”</li> </ul>

## Notes

1. Osteopathic Medicine Match Timeline. American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine. [http://www.aacom.org/docs/default-source/medical-students/aacom\\_match2014\\_infographic\\_finalv2.pdf?sfvrsn=2](http://www.aacom.org/docs/default-source/medical-students/aacom_match2014_infographic_finalv2.pdf?sfvrsn=2). Accessed May 7, 2015.
2. AACOM 2013-14 Academic Year Survey of Graduating Seniors Summary Report. American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM); 2014. <http://www.aacom.org/docs/default-source/data-and-trends/2013-14-GSSSR.pdf?sfvrsn=6>. Accessed May 7, 2015.
3. Teitelbaum H. Osteopathic Medical Education in the United States: Improving the Future of Medicine. Teitelbaum; 2005.
4. Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) Osteopathic Recognition Requirements. <https://www.acgme.org/acgmeweb/tabid/469/ProgramandInstitutionalAccreditation/OsteopathicPrinciplesCommittee.aspx>. Accessed May 7, 2015.

## ABOUT AACOM

The American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM) was founded in 1898 to support and assist the nation's osteopathic medical schools, and to serve as a unifying voice for osteopathic medical education. AACOM's mission is to provide leadership for the osteopathic medical education community by promoting excellence in medical education, research and service, and by fostering innovation and quality across the continuum of osteopathic medical education to improve the health of the American public.