

A GOOD MEDICAL SCHOOL

Choosing a good medical school is the first step to becoming a good physician, and indeed one of the best physicians in the world.

The medical schools in your country are your first choice. You could get into one of those and then go on to specialize at one of the most renowned universities in the world. That is how the majority of today's most prominent physicians abroad started out. They completed basic medical studies in their home country and then managed to continue at one or more internationally recognized centers elsewhere. George Papanikolaou graduated from the Athens Medical School before ending up at Cornell University in New York and working there on the technique that was later

named after him, the Papanicolaou or Pap test, which has saved millions of women from cervical cancer.

If you are a very good student in junior high and high school, or even if you are not a straight-A student but are a charismatic kid who knows a lot, learns much faster than the other kids in class, and is bored and frustrated at school, it is worth thinking about applying to the internationally recognized top medical schools.

We all know which the best medical schools in the world are, and we also know how very difficult it is to be accepted by them. In Europe, besides Cambridge and Oxford medical schools, other medical schools in England are considered very good, which is why international competition for admission is intense. Applying to these schools in England requires special preparation, which should start early.

Unlike in Europe, where a candidate for medical school is a high school graduate, in the United States a candidate for medical school is a graduate of a four-year college.

While in Europe you can get your degree in medicine after six years of studies, in the United States the minimum time is eight years. In addition to the very

stringent process of admission to college, one must undergo an even more demanding process in order to be admitted to medical school, part of which is the MCAT (Medical College Admission Test).

So then a logical question would be: "Why not finish med school in Europe in six years and then pursue a specialty in the United States, instead of trying to finish med school in the United States after at least eight years?"

The answer, as we shall see later, is that the best American centers and universities that offer medical specialty training prefer US medical school graduates. Thus, the most formidable graduates of Europe's internationally renowned medical schools are obliged to undergo additional training or to carry out additional research at a US university before being able to specialize. Therefore, what started off as six years turn into at least eight before graduates or students can move on to where both their potential and their heart drive them.

The great benefit of entering med school later in the United States compared to Europe is that it enables the prospective physician to make this decision at a more mature age.

If the thought of being a physician for the rest of your life doesn't really excite you, if the pressure of your parents—especially those who are physicians themselves—is overwhelming, then the delayed choice of a graduate school of medicine in America will help you make your final decision. Conversely, if the desire to serve your fellow humans through medicine grew while you were studying another science, now is your chance to pursue a four-year graduate degree in medicine. Besides those in the United States, similar graduate medical schools exist in other countries and continents.

If in the end you don't get admitted into any of your country's medical schools, if you are unable to get into the difficult English medical schools, and if you're not considering the US process, then the question of whether you should study at one of the numerous for-profit English-speaking medical schools in Cyprus, Romania, the Czech Republic, Hungary, etc., becomes imperative. My advice would be to carefully examine the school's international rankings in order to choose the most internationally recognized ones that demonstrably allow their graduates to pursue their specialization at the best universities in the United States and Europe. The advertising—and often misleading—

messages of these for-profit English-speaking medical schools may get you enrolled in medical school very easily. But the road from then on will be a difficult one. Your specialty training is directly related to the medical school you graduated from. The best universities and internationally acclaimed hospitals and centers for medical specialization select candidates from the best medical schools and, as we will see later, there is tough competition among many candidates from many medical schools around the world for just a few positions to train in medical specialties.