

Oregon Medical Board



In 1889, Oregon legislators responded to demands from the medical community and passed a bill creating the Board of Medical Examiners. The board was charged with regulating the practice of medicine in the state of Oregon and included “three persons from among the most competent physicians in the state.” Initial license requirements entailed showing a diploma from a medical school, passing an exam or, if already in practice, registering within 60 days of the new law’s passage.

Six years later, the legislature added two members to the board and defined unprofessional medical conducts for the first time to include “employment of cappers or steerers (payment for patient testimonials), moral turpitude, betraying professional secrets and obtaining a fee for the care of an incurable disease.” In 1897, the board released its [First Biennial Report](#) to the governor. Applicants during the early years of the board were required to submit their [educational credentials](#) and pass an exam on all branches of medicine before being granted a [license to practice medicine](#). In 1907, osteopathic physicians were placed under the board’s supervision and an osteopathic physician was added to the board.

Legislation passed in 1931 requiring all new physicians to pass a state-administered basic science test before a medical license would be granted. By the late 1940s, the board began to place physicians who had violated the Medical Practice Act on probation. These disciplinary efforts combined with the science exam requirement made Oregon one of the most difficult states in which to get a medical license. The exam requirement was subsequently repealed in 1973 when it was determined that other credentialing/licensing exam served the same purpose.

In 1975, the legislature changed the Medical Practice Act to allow a physician’s license to be summarily suspended when the physician poses an immediate danger to the public. Additional legislation passed that guarantees confidentiality to anyone filing a complaint against a physician. It also requires physicians to report directly to the board colleagues who violate the Medical Practice Act. These legislative changes resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of complaints received by the board.

In the 1970s, the board began to gain responsibility for the licensing of other health care professionals. Currently the board oversees physician assistants, acupuncturists and podiatrists. The board is responsible for more than 13,400 licensees, up from 627 licensees in 1900. The board now consists of 11 members including two public members. The Oregon Board of Medical Examiners was officially renamed the [Oregon Medical Board](#) in January 2008.

In 2006, Administrators in Medicine honored the Oregon board with its “Best of Boards” award for placing license applications and status reports for license applications on the board’s website. In addition, three past presidents/chairs of the FSMB came from Oregon, including [George H. Lage, M.D.](#) (1966-67), [Ray L. Casterline, M.D.](#) (1972-73), and [Anthony J. Cortese, D.O.](#) (1988-89).