

Rhode Island Board of Medical Licensure and Discipline



Initially, medical licensure in Rhode Island was the responsibility of the Rhode Island Medical Society, which was created by the state's General Assembly in February 1812. In its original charter, the General Assembly gave the society "full power and authority to examine all candidates for the practice of physic and surgery... respecting their skill in their profession; and if upon examination the said candidates shall be found skilled in their profession, and fitted for the practice of it, they shall receive the approbation of said society in letters testimonial..."

More than 80 years later, the General Assembly enacted the Medical Practice Act of 1895 regulating the practice of medicine. The act followed laws regulating the pharmaceutical profession in 1871 and the practice of dentistry in 1881. In the year after the passage of the Medical Practice Act, the State Board of Health received more than 450 applications for medical licensure.

In 1914, the General Assembly amended the act to provide for the licensing of osteopaths by the State Board of Health based on recommendation by a Board of Examiners of Osteopathy. In 1927, the State Board of Health was given responsibility for the licensing of chiropractors based on recommendation by a State Board of Chiropractic Examiners.

In 1929, the legislature reorganized the State Board of Health into the Public Health Commission, which was responsible for the licensing and regulation of medical practitioners and supervision of other examining boards. At about same time, [Byron U. Richards, M.D.](#) of Rhode Island was elected president of the FSMB, serving from 1927 to 1928.

In 1935, the Board of Medical Examiners in Medicine was created to assume the licensing and regulatory responsibilities of the Public Health Commission. Five years later, the state adopted its basic sciences law, which required certification of education and knowledge in basic sciences to be licensed to practice medicine. The law was in response to a large number of naturopaths who, with little or no training in premedical science, were setting up offices to treat the sick.

Today the [Rhode Island Board of Medical Licensure & Discipline](#) is a 12-member board responsible for overseeing the medical licensing and disciplining of physicians for the state, as well as assuring the achievement of continuing medical education standards. The board is an agency of the state government established to protect the public and assure high practice and professional standards in the nearly 4,000-member physician community.

Sources: "Medical Licensure in Rhode Island," Casey T.B., Kelly E.F., DiMaio M., Myrick J.C., *Rhode Island Medical Journal*, 1962 Dec. 40:625-9.

"A History of Quality: The R.I. Medical Society's Commitment," Newell E. Warde, Ph.D., *R.I. Medicine and Health*, Vol. 92, No. 8, Aug. 2009, pg. 269-71.