



International Medical Schools

International medical schools, many in the Caribbean, may seem like an attractive alternative for students worried about medical school admissions. Sand, sun, and beautiful island views are inviting and it is somewhat easier to gain admission in an international medical school; however, they are not the right choice for everyone. While some programs do indeed offer a great educational choice for some students who want to start their education rather than wait to apply again in the U.S., you need to carefully weigh all of your options and choose wisely as not all schools are equal in the education they offer.

Things to Consider

Before Applying

- You should explore all possibilities in the United States. Have you looked at post baccalaureate programs? What about Osteopathic Medicine? Podiatry? All are excellent options.
- What is the attrition rate? Generally it is much higher than U.S. medical schools. Many students attending these schools have marginal test taking abilities and academic skills. This, combined with the stress of medical school while living in another country and isolation from support networks, often leads to a high dropout rate (possibly with a sizeable accumulated debt).

Cost

- These schools can be expensive. With books, travel expenses, room and board, you can easily pay over \$300,000.
- You may be eligible for U.S. government loans at several programs, but not all.

Opportunities

- Does the program offer third and fourth year clinical rotations in the United States?
- If you are thinking of starting medical education at an international school and then transferring back to a school in the U.S., you should know this is rarely successful.
- Although graduates of international medical schools go into residencies in all specialty areas of medicine, they have a tough time matching with residency programs in highly competitive specialty areas. Many stay in primary care (which this country does need). If you want to attend one of these programs because of a low MCAT score and want a competitive residency, this might not be a good match for you.

Additional Requirements

- How many students passed the boards on the first attempt? Many programs claim high pass rates, but this is after many students have dropped out.
- A number of schools also require pre-tests before they allow students to sit for the board exams. They may require a student to repeat a year if they are unable to pass the pre-test to keep up the program's "first attempt" pass rate.
- Graduates of some international medical schools have to be Education Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG) certified or complete a 5th year Pathway Program before entering a residency. Different states have different licensure requirements. You need to find out about this first.

More Information

See the [ECFMG](http://www.ecfm.org/) website at: <http://www.ecfm.org/>

Note: State medical licensing boards often list schools from which they will not license physicians. Many states follow the recommendations of the State of California. This is another good place to do some research.

