MEDICAL EDUCATION FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Regardless of level of medical training, international students must pass the examination given at the end of the first year of medical study (PACES).

> A medical residency competition governs entry into the third (doctoral level) stage of medical education. Students must register by the end of March. Eligibility tests are given in September by French embassies (cultural office) and consulates. Admission tests are given in December. In 2015-2016, eight residencies were offered in seven specialties. www.cng.sante.fr/Concours-d-internat-de-medecine-a.html

> General practitioners or specialists having earned medical degrees abroad must register for the DFMS (diplôme de formation médicale spécialisée) or DFMSA (diplôme de formation médicale spécialisée approfondie). Registration forms are available from the cultural office at French embassies. The number of places available is limited by discipline and specialty for each region of the world.

11 SPECIALTY AREAS

- Anesthesiology and reanimation
- Medical biology
- Gynecology and obstetrics
- General practice
- Occupational medicine
- Pediatrics
- Psychiatry
- Public health

SURGICAL SPECIALTIES

- General surgery
- Neurosurgery
- Ophthalmology
- Otolaryngology and cervico-facial surgery
- Stomatology

MEDICAL SPECIALTIES

- Anatomy and cell pathology
- Cardiology and vascular disease
- Dermatology and venereology
- Gastroenterology and hepatology
- Medical genetics
- Hematology
- Internal medicine
- Nuclear medicine
- Physical medicine and rehabilitation
- Nephrology
- Neurology
- Oncology
- Pneumology
- Radiodiagnosis and medical imaging
- Rheumatology

IN FIGURES

Source: DASF / www.insee.fr
- 220,000 practicing physicians (2014)
- 130,000 practitioners in private or semi-private practices
- 70,000 practitioners employed by hospitals
- 24,000 salaried physicians working outside hospitals (research, pharmaceuticals, analytical laboratories, public agencies, education, armed services, humanitarian organizations, etc.)

USEFUL LINKS

- National Association of Medical Students in France (ANEMF): www.anemf.org
- National residency center for medicine, pharmacy, and dentistry (CNCI) www.cnci.univ-paris5.fr
- National center for hospital practitioners: www.cng.sante.fr
- Independent medical and paramedical community (medical and paramedical students): www.remede.org
- Degree program in medical French (DFM) from the Paris chamber of commerce and industry (CCIP): www.fda.ccp.fr/examen/dfp-medical-b2
- Network of university hospital centers (CHRU): www.reseau-chu.org
- Université de Strasbourg, faculty of medicine (DFMS-DFMSA admission process): www.ulpmed.u-strasbg.fr
- Francophone digital university of health and sport sciences: www.unf3s.org

MEDICINE

France’s great medical tradition is internationally recognized, as exemplified by 13 Nobel prizes for physiology or medicine (Jules Hoffmann shared the 2011 Nobel prize in medicine with American Bruce Beutler) and nearly 80 medical firsts achieved by French practitioners between 1950 and 2011. Those firsts include the discovery of the genetic cause of Down syndrome (1958), the first kidney transplant from a related donor (1959), the hepatitis B vaccine (1981), the implantation of an insulin pump in a diabetic (1981), HIV (1983), the use of stem cells from umbilical blood (1993), allogeneic face transplant (2005), and human autotransfusion of red corpuscles from stem cells (2011).

Today’s medicine combines knowledge and techniques from an array of sciences in order to promote human health and fight disease. Advances in knowledge and techniques have resulted in the emergence of 11 specialties from which medical students choose. In addition to the degree of doctor of medicine, pharmacy, or dental surgery, France’s faculties of medicine and pharmacy grant the licence and master (both national diplomas) in specific health-related aspects of computer science, law, the health sciences, public health, the social sciences, and bio- and nanotechnologies.

A general medical degree requires nine years of postsecondary study. Specialists must put in another one to two years of study. Medical education is extremely selective in France. Only 15 to 20% of students pass the examination required to enter the second year of medical study (known as the PACES). The total number of places available in France’s medical schools (all degree programs combined) is determined each year by a system known as the numerus clausus. In 2014-2015, 7,497 places were available. The number of students from outside the European Union is limited to a maximum of 8% of the places determined by the numerus clausus after the first-year PACES examination.
Integrated into the European LMD system, medical studies in France are divided into stages. The universities deliver medical education in cooperation with France’s 32 CHUs, or university hospital centers. The first year of medical education, known as PACES, is open to applicants with a French baccalauréat or equivalent, with a preference for a scientific diploma. Students may enroll in another institution for complementary training in order to improve their chances on the end-of-year examination. Medical education is delivered in French only. Students must be proficient in French at level B2 (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages).

FIRST STAGE: PACES (FIRST-YEAR COMMON CURRICULUM IN HEALTH)

Spent in a university faculty of medicine, the first year of medical education is the same for all four basic medical tracks: (i) medicine (including physical therapy and related therapies); (ii) dental surgery; (iii) pharmacy, and (iv) midwifery. At the end of the year, students may take up to two of four distinct examinations to determine if they will be permitted to continue to the second year.

In the first semester, the core curriculum combines the study of basic sciences (chemistry, biology, embryology, histology) with functional aspects of the organization of systems and mechanisms. Students take an examination at the end of the semester and are ranked by performance. On average, 85% of students are allowed to continue in PACES, while the remaining 15% are steered into another field of study. In the second semester, students continue studying the functional aspects of the organization of systems and mechanisms. This is complemented by morphological aspects, pharmacology, humanities, and social sciences (health, society, humanity). Students also choose one or more courses specific to the four tracks outlined above. At the end of the semester, they take an examination specific to the track they have chosen. Examination results are combined into a ranking known as the numerus clausus. The possibility of continuing medical education is determined by one’s ranking. Students have the right, upon considering their ranking, to reconsider their chosen track, which may improve their chances of being offered a place for the second year.

SECOND YEAR: PCEM 2 (SECOND YEAR OF UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION)

The second year advances the training provided in the first year and leads to a diploma. The DFGSM 2 recognizes general training in medical sciences. Students must complete a 4-week nursing internship in a hospital setting. At the end of the second year, students take an examination to determine their eligibility to continue into the second stage of medical education.

FIRST STAGE: DCEM 1

Students deepen the education received in the first stage, adding new disciplines such as clinical and laboratory medicine, imaging, as well as foreign languages, computer science, and law.

SECOND STAGE: DCEM 2

Students are allowed to continue in PACES, while the remaining 15% are steered into another field of study. In the second semester, students continue studying the functional aspects of the organization of systems and mechanisms. This is complemented by morphological aspects, pharmacology, humanities, and social sciences (health, society, humanity). Students also choose one or more courses specific to the four tracks outlined above. At the end of the semester, they take an examination specific to the track they have chosen. Examination results are combined into a ranking known as the numerus clausus. The possibility of continuing medical education is determined by one’s ranking. Students have the right, upon considering their ranking, to reconsider their chosen track, which may improve their chances of being offered a place for the second year. The number of second-year admissions is set each year by decree.

SECOND YEAR: PCEM 2 (SECOND YEAR OF UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION)

The second year advances the training provided in the first year and leads to a diploma. The DFGSM 2 recognizes general training in medical sciences. Students must complete a 4-week nursing internship in a hospital setting. At the end of the second year, students take an examination to determine their eligibility to continue into the second stage of medical education.