

New U.S. Medical Schools Will Teach Students Without Animals

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Nine new medical schools being established around the country to address the need for more physicians will not use dogs or other live animals to teach basic concepts in anatomy, physiology, pharmacology, or surgery, PCRM has recently learned. That news confirms a trend in U.S. medical education: Ninety percent of American medical schools have eliminated live animal labs.

Four new allopathic (M.D.) schools will open in 2009 and 2010. All but one (Oakland University Medical School in Michigan), which has not yet developed its curriculum, have confirmed that they will not use live animals in their medical curricula. These schools are Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center—El Paso, the Medical College of Northeastern Pennsylvania, and the University of Central Florida College of Medicine. A fifth school, San Juan Bautista School of Medicine in Puerto Rico, recently received its U.S. accreditation and reports that it halted live animal use several years ago.

Five new osteopathic (D.O.) schools are also set to open in 2007 and 2008. Osteopathic medical schools teach methods of diagnosis and treatment just as allopathic schools do, but they also train students to place additional emphasis on normal body mechanics as central to maintaining good health. Four of the five new schools (A.T. Still University School of Osteopathic Medicine (Arizona), Pacific Northwest University College of Osteopathic Medicine, Rocky Vista University College of Osteopathic Medicine, and Lincoln Memorial University—DeBusk College of Osteopathic Medicine) have confirmed that they will not be using animals in medical education. The fifth school—Touro College of Osteopathic Medicine in New York City—has not yet responded to PCRM's inquiries.



Twenty years ago, live animals were commonly used in anatomy, physiology, pharmacology, and surgery courses at medical schools. A standard laboratory exercise involved anesthetizing an animal, followed by dissection, injecting pharmaceuticals, or practicing surgical techniques. The animals were killed after the lab exercises were over.

But today, the vast majority of medical schools have switched to more relevant and humane methods, such as lifelike simulators, interactive computer models, virtual reality programs, case reviews, standardized patient exams, and apprenticeships in clinics and hospitals. Every new school established in the past quarter-century has not used live animals in its curriculum.