

German Medical Association

Federation of the German Chambers of Physicians



National Report Germany

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by

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Basic medical training and quality assurance in the establishment of new medical schools

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Basic medical training and quality assurance in the establishment of new medical schools



Who is responsible for the accreditation of basic medical training in your country?

- The Ministry of Health is responsible for the regulation of the medical profession in Germany, as well as for setting uniform standards for medical education
- The German Accreditation Council is responsible for the accreditation of universities
 - Tasks and role agreed to by all 16 states in 2017 in Interstate Treaty on the organisation of a joint accreditation system to ensure quality of teaching and learning
 - Evaluates and assesses if a university can offer basic medical training

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- The Federal Medical Regulation (Bundesärzteordnung) is a federal law that applies all over Germany
 - determines who may use the professional title of physician and regulates admission to the medical profession
 - Contains provisions on the licensing of physicians, the full and temporary license, the withdrawal, revocation, and suspension of medical licenses, criminal sanctions, etc.
- On this basis the MoH, in conjunction with the Bundesrat (Upper House of the German Parliament representing the 16 German states), issues
 - the Licensing Regulations for Physicians (Approbationsordnung, ÄApprO)

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- Undergraduate medical education for physicians is nationally regulated.
- Details regarding the contents of the degree programme, seminars, internships, etc., are laid down in the Licensing Regulations for Physicians, the curriculum guidelines of the universities, etc.

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How many medical schools/medical students are there in your country?

- There are 36 public and 5 private universities in Germany
 - Approximately 201,258 students in Germany are currently studying human medicine
 - 11,600 new students every year

Sources: StBA, GMA

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Do you have a shortage of physicians in your country?

➤ Yes

- 4.5 physicians per 1,000 inhabitants
- 8.5% of all physicians are already above 65 years of age and 21.6% are above 60 years of age
- Calculations forecast that while demand for physicians will continue to increase until 2030, the supply of physicians will continuously decrease
- Too few prospective physicians to balance out the vast number of retiring physicians in Germany
- Rural areas are affected by the shortage of physicians due to generally weak infrastructure

Sources: StBA, GMA, KBV, DÄBl

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Is there a plan in your country to increase the number of medical students?

If yes, what does it look like?

- GMA demands 6,000 additional spots for basic medical training to ensure appropriate medical care in all regions of Germany and to meet the needs of an increasingly aging population with greater health needs
- For years, the MoH didn't acknowledge a general shortage of physicians, as the number of physicians per 1,000 inhabitants is comparatively higher than in other countries
- At the last German Medical Assembly in 2023 in Essen, the Minister of Health acknowledged for the first time the need to increase the number of medical students

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Do you have any private medical schools in your country or are any private medical schools planned? If yes, are they geared to local or international students (e.g., other languages)?

- 5 private universities offer human medicine programmes, mostly catered to local students, as the curricula are taught in German
- One school offers a bilingual (German and English) programme
- A range of privately funded medical training opportunities have been established in Germany: Only a few of them operate in accordance with the German Medical Licensure Act and are thus subject to quality assurance regulations in Germany
- Most are the result of German hospitals cooperating with universities from other EU countries. The content of the courses and the examinations are subject to the regulations of the university's home country

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Is your chamber involved in the discussion?

- The GMA is involved in opinion-forming processes and discussions and part of this role includes commenting on legislative drafts
- On this issue, the GMA published a statement following a legislative draft from Ministry of Health (14 January 2021)

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CAM (Complementary and alternative
medicine)
and the role of the medical chambers

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CAM (Complementary and alternative medicine) and the role of the medical chambers

What role does CAM play in your country?

- CAM is widely used in Germany
- Heilpraktiker (non-medical practitioner) is a legally protected professional term and may only be used by those who have permission to practise alternative medicine
- Permission to practise alternative medicine is granted by the competent local health office (“Gesundheitsamt”) after passing a legally regulated examination given by a public health officer. It is not a state license, as it is not a state regulated profession.
- According to statistics, the most popular methods used are homeopathy, herbal medicine and acupuncture

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CAM (Complementary and alternative medicine) and the role of the medical chambers

- Many health insurance funds (Krankenkassen) also cover or contribute toward treatment expenses for the most common methods, such as acupuncture, osteopathy and homeopathy
- The demand for alternative medicine has been increasing in recent decades
- Alternative medicine is especially popular among women, respondents with a high level of education, chronically ill individuals, and individuals with a more health-conscious lifestyle
 - Often not used as a substitute, but rather as a supplement to conventional treatment

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CAM (Complementary and alternative medicine) and the role of the medical chambers

Is CAM included in any specialty medical training curricula?

- In the field of traditional, complementary and integrative medicine, the following training options are offered:
 - Additional training in acupuncture (Zusatz-Weiterbildung Akupunktur)
 - Additional training in manual medicine (Zusatz-Weiterbildung Manuelle Medizin)
 - Additional training in naturopathy (Zusatz-Weiterbildung Naturheilverfahren)
- Additional training in homeopathy was removed from the Specialty Training Regulations in 2022

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CAM (Complementary and alternative medicine) and the role of the medical chambers

- The requirements and standards of specialty training are laid down in the GMA's **(Model) Specialty Training Regulations**
- These are not legally binding for the individual physician
- Competent authorities for specialty training are the **State Chambers of Physicians**:
 - State Chambers implement these standards into their **own Specialty Training Regulations** ("Weiterbildungsordnung"), which may vary slightly from one chamber to the next
- The Non-Medical Practitioners Act ("Heilpraktikergesetz") plays a central role in Germany's health care system:
 - Only physicians and naturopathic practitioners may practise alternative medicine. The Act also contains the legal definition of the term "Heilkunde"
 - Does not provide for training or state examinations, which traditionally characterise the qualifications for regulated healing professions

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CAM (Complementary and alternative medicine) and the role of the medical chambers

Does your chamber have a position on CAM? If yes, how do you deal with it?

- The complexity of the medical setting, particularly the extent of medical expertise required to practise medicine with minimised risk, is underestimated
- In the opinion of GMA, this can only be achieved by significantly restricting the range of activities permitted to be carried out by healing practitioners
 - In concrete terms: Exclusion of all invasive measures, as well as the treatment of cancer

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CAM (Complementary and alternative medicine) and the role of the medical chambers

Is there a system or legal framework in place to prevent misinformation?

- Use of “alternative” treatment methods is generally permitted in Germany, as long as there are no moral violations in keeping with the German Civil Code (BGB) and the German Criminal Code (StGB)
- Before such methods are carried out, the patient must be fully informed of any risks and side effects
- If a more promising recognised therapy is available, the patient must be informed of this as a matter of priority

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CAM (Complementary and alternative medicine) and the role of the medical chambers

- The practice of complementary alternative medicine by physicians is regulated by the professional code of conduct for physicians:
 - “Physicians are obliged to adhere to the regulations governing the practice of their profession” (Art. 2(5), MBO-Ä)
 - Physicians are prohibited from exercising other activities incompatible with the ethical principles of the medical profession (Art. 3 (1) MBO-Ä)
- In addition, the Federal Medical Order (Bundesärzteordnung (BÄO)) clearly defines that the use of the term “medical science” (Heilkunde) can only be used by medical physicians (Art. 2 (5), BÄO)

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Opportunities and challenges of new medical assistance professions

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Opportunities and challenges of new medical assistance professions

Are there any plans in place to expand the scope of practice of other health care professionals (nurses, pharmacists, physiotherapists, psychologists, etc.) in your country?

- The physician assistant profession was introduced in 2005
- In 2017, the German Medical Assembly supported this designation
- There are also plans by the MoH to establish more of an academic track for health professions, such as physiotherapists, speech therapists and occupational therapists
- The current coalition government agreed to introduce community health nurses during the next legislative period
- Pharmacists received temporary authorisation to administer COVID-19 vaccinations during the pandemic - restricted to COVID vaccinations

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Opportunities and challenges of new medical assistance professions

Are there any new health professions in your country (planned), which are intended to assist physicians (physician assistant, specialised nurses, nurse practitioners, etc.)?

- Physician assistant is a comparatively new health profession, developed by the GMA and the National Association of Statutory Health Insurance Physicians (KBV)
Public/private non profit
32.6%
- Since 2005, 179 graduates of PA programs in Germany have taken up immediate employment in patient care
- As of October/November 2015, there were at least 225 PA students in training
- They are currently active in inpatient care, both in rural and urban areas, as well as in maximum care providers

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Opportunities and challenges of new medical assistance professions

- A new specialisation is the community health nurse (CHN), which is part of the nursing profession
- “Major activities include case management, patient education, individual and family advocacy, and an interdisciplinary approach” (WHO, 2010)
- The implementation of this new profession in Germany is part of the coalition agreement of the current government (2021-2025)
- GMA was involved in the creation of the strategy for implementing academic programmes for CHN in 2020
- In 2010, the GMA established a training curriculum for medical assistants and physician assistants – “non-medical assistants”:
 - Non-medical assistants support physicians in the care of patients through home or nursing home visits. The prerequisite for participation in the training is a qualified vocational qualification in accordance with the Ordinance on Vocational Training for Medical Assistants, as well as at least three years of working experience in a general practitioner’s office

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Opportunities and challenges of new medical assistance professions

What is their task and how is the training structured?

Physician assistant:

- Due to their university education, PAs take on the supervision of complex documentation and management processes and organisational procedures
- They help develop such processes on behalf of medical management
- They disburden physicians in various areas of activity whenever this does not involve services that must be provided by the physician

Tasks:

- General process management
- Medical process and documentation management
- Patient-related activities that can be delegated

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Opportunities and challenges of new medical assistance professions

Community health nurse:

- Qualify on the basis of an initial qualification as a nurse in accordance with the Nursing Professions Act and professional experience in nursing through a master's degree in "Community Health Nursing".

Tasks (selection):

- Assessment of the specific needs of the population living in a municipality or region
- Identification of the regional needs, health risks or healthcare shortages facing specific populations; development and implementation of suitable interventions
- Health promotion, prevention, and health protection, including contributing toward a health-supportive environment or environments ("settings")

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Opportunities and challenges of new medical assistance professions

- Disease management, including case management and coordination of care
- Guidance and support of individuals, families, and population groups
- Development of regionally differentiated, and needs-based care concepts, including assessment and analysis of all relevant population-related and care-structural data as well
- Leadership, (further) development of care structures and advocacy

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Opportunities and challenges of new medical assistance professions

Who is responsible for the curricula?

Physician assistant:

- Curriculum is drafted in accordance with the National Competence-Based Catalogue of Learning Objectives in Medicine (NKL 2015).
- The State Chambers of Physicians are responsible for the implementation and uniformity of the programme.

Community health nurse:

- According to the coalition agreement, the states will be responsible for the implementation of the programme. However, the German Nurses Association has stressed that the specialisation needs to be added to the Nursing Professions Act to ensure standardised federal regulation (GNA, 2022).

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Opportunities and challenges of new medical assistance professions

Was your chamber involved in developing these new professions?

In the case of the physician assistant, the GMA has played a significant role in designing not only the role of the physician assistant but also the curriculum.





Thank you!