Which profession best trains its students in musculoskeletal medicine?

What percent of students pass the same "basic competency test" in musculoskeletal medicine?

- Medical: 18%
- Physical Therapy: 24%
- Osteopathic: 30%
- Chiropractic: 52%

Data taken from:


Which profession best trains its students in musculoskeletal medicine?

Average scores on the same "basic competency test" in musculoskeletal medicine

- **Chiropractic**: 73%
- **Osteopathic**: 66%
- **Physical Therapy**: 66%
- **Medical**: 60%

Data taken from:
Do chiropractors know more about musculoskeletal medicine than medical doctors?


When given the same test on musculoskeletal medicine (a test designed by orthopedic surgeons), chiropractic students score nearly 25% higher than medical students.
Do chiropractors know more about musculoskeletal medicine than physical therapists?


When given the same test on musculoskeletal medicine (a test designed by orthopedic surgeons), chiropractic students are more than 2x as likely to be judged “competent” compared to physical therapy students.
The adequacy of medical school education in musculoskeletal medicine.
University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, Philadelphia, USA.

Study background: 85 first-year medical & surgical residents (graduates of some of the US's best medical schools – Harvard, Yale, Johns Hopkins, etc.) were given a 25-question test to assess basic competency in musculoskeletal medicine. Question excerpts: 1) "A pt has LBP that wakes him up from sleep. What 2 diagnoses are you concerned about?" Tumor and infection (33% answered correctly); 2) "How is motor function of the 5th lumbar nerve root tested?" Extend the big toe (20% answered correctly); 3) "What mm are involved in tennis elbow?" Wrist extensors (18% answered correctly). Results: 82% of "medical school graduates failed a valid musculoskeletal competency examination." Their avg. score was 59.6% (73% was considered a passing score). Conclusion: "...medical school preparation in musculoskeletal medicine is inadequate."

A description of physical therapists' knowledge in managing musculoskeletal conditions.
US Army-Baylor University Doctoral Program in Physical Therapy, Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, TX, USA. childsjd@sbcglobal.net

Study background: 791 PT's from the USA were studied: 1) 378 PT students randomly chosen from 26 different programs in the terminal phase of their program's curriculum (64% in doctoral degree programs); 2) 413 practicing PT's in the armed services w/ at least 1 yr of experience (9 yrs, avg.). All took a 25-item test on basic competency in musculoskeletal medicine (no time limit, passing score = 73.1%). Results: PT students - 24% passed (avg. score = 66%), practicing PT's - 67% passed (avg. score = 76%). Conclusion: "...physical therapists demonstrated higher levels of knowledge in managing musculoskeletal conditions than medical students..."