

# Pros and cons of shortening medical school discussed

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(HealthDay)—The pros and cons of shortening medical school to three years are discussed in two perspective pieces published in the Sept. 19 issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

Steven B. Abramson, M.D., from the New York University Langone Medical Center in New York City, and colleagues discuss the benefits of shortening [medical school](#) to three years, citing the example of fast-track programs currently offered at some institutions. Benefits of shortened training include allowing graduates to enter practice sooner and increase the physician-years in practice, helping to address the physician shortage. In addition, the three-year pathway could reduce the student [debt burden](#), by simultaneously reducing debt and also providing an additional year of earnings. Careful mentoring and monitoring is

recommended for the success of a shortened training program.

Stanley Goldfarb, M.D., and Gail Morrison, M.D., from the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, discuss the potential shortcomings of shortening medical school. The authors note that, although exceptional [students](#) may be capable of accelerated learning, for typical students, the duration of medical school should not be reduced. Past efforts to reduce the duration of medical school have been aborted; students and faculty felt pressured by the compression of the material. Students who completed medical school in three years reported feeling exhausted, and many extended their studies. Students should be better prepared for the transition to residency; the current fourth-year curriculum fails to prepare students for more advanced responsibilities and should focus on expanding clinical and non-[clinical knowledge](#).

"Given the growing complexity of medicine, it seems counterproductive to compress the curriculum into three years, reducing both preclinical and clinical experiences," Goldfarb and Morrison write.

**More information:** [Full Text - Abramson](#)  
[Full Text - Goldfarb and Morrison](#)

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