

Abstract: The modern Western undergraduate medical education system involves the incorporation of three main teaching methods: didactic classroom learning, clinical skills practice, and laboratory training. The extent to which each method has been formally emphasized has varied between countries and time periods. From the early 1700s until the early 1900s, three main changes in medical education were identified that define the transition from the pre-Age of Enlightenment methods of teaching to the modern day medical education systems in the United States and Western Europe. These are: 1. The abandonment of apprenticeships in favor of more formal training in universities and teaching hospitals. 2. The combination of didactic learning, laboratory training, and clinical skills practice. 3. The standardization of medical school curricula and the granting of medical licenses to reduce variation in the competencies of different physicians. These three changes occurred in different countries at different times, but the general trend seen indicates that most educational innovation occurred first in the German states before being adopted by its neighbor France. The United Kingdom and the United States were the last major Western countries to adopt the three changes and enter the modern era of medical education.