

Who Decided Medicine is Science?

Short answer: **no**—there is **no evidence** that Rockefeller (or the Rockefeller Foundation) formally *decided* that physicians should be considered scientists. That claim is an **oversimplification**.

Here is the accurate, historically grounded explanation:

What is true

- In the early 20th century, the **Rockefeller Foundation** and related Rockefeller-funded bodies (notably the **General Education Board**) **heavily financed medical education reform** in the United States and Canada.
- These reforms strongly **avored laboratory-based medicine**, bacteriology, and hospital-centered training.
- Rockefeller funding **rewarded institutions** that aligned with this model and **defunded or marginalized** others (e.g., homeopathy, naturopathy).

What is often confused

- The **Flexner Report (1910)** is frequently cited in this context.
 - It was commissioned by the **Carnegie Foundation**, not Rockefeller.
 - However, **Rockefeller money later implemented Flexner’s recommendations**, giving Rockefeller enormous practical influence.
- Flexner argued that medicine should be “*scientific*”—but he **never redefined physicians as scientists in the chemical or physical sense**.

What did NOT happen

- There was **no formal declaration**, policy, or scientific standard stating that physicians are scientists.
- No requirement was introduced that physicians be trained to the level of **chemists, physicists, or mathematicians**.
- No shift occurred that granted MDs expertise in **isolation, purification, characterization, or validation of physical substances**—the core work of science.

What actually happened

- Medicine adopted **the language and prestige of science** without adopting its **methods or standards**.
- Institutional authority, funding, and repetition gradually **normalized calling medicine “science”**, and physicians “scientists.”
- Over time, this became **culturally accepted**, not scientifically justified.

Bottom line

Rockefeller **did not decide** that physicians are scientists.

Rockefeller **financed a medical system that borrowed scientific language and authority**, while remaining a **professional, practice-based discipline**.

The confusion persists because **power, funding, and repetition** replaced scientific definition.

That distinction matters.