

Some facts about osteopathic physicians

- DOs are one of the fastest growing segments of health care professionals in the United States. By the year 2020, more than 100,000 osteopathic physicians are expected to be in active medical practice.
- Approximately 60% of practicing DOs specialize in the primary care fields of family medicine, general internal medicine, obstetrics and gynecology, and pediatrics.
- DOs represent nearly 7% of the total U.S. physician population.
- Many DOs fill a critical need for physicians by practicing in rural and other medically underserved communities.
- Osteopathic physicians have treated U.S. presidents and Olympic athletes. They have contributed to the fight against AIDS and the fight for civil rights. And they have held high-ranking positions, such as the surgeon general of the U.S. Army, the chief medical officer of the U.S. Coast Guard, the director of the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, and the administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.



For more information on osteopathic medicine or to find a DO, visit the American Osteopathic Association's Web site at www.osteopathic.org.

If you would like to order additional brochures, go to www.do-online.org, select the "AOA" tab, and then click the "Store" link.

To order brochures over the phone, call (800) 621-1773, ext. 1.



AMERICAN OSTEOPATHIC ASSOCIATION
TREATING OUR FAMILY AND YOURS

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Osteopathic medicine

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You are more than just the sum of your body parts. That's why doctors of osteopathic medicine (DOs) practice a "whole person" approach to health care. Instead of just treating specific symptoms, osteopathic physicians concentrate on treating you as a whole.

Osteopathic physicians understand how all the body's systems are interconnected and how each one affects the others. They focus special attention on the musculoskeletal system, which reflects and influences the condition of all other body systems.

This system of bones and muscles makes up about two-thirds of the body's mass, and a routine part of the examination DOs give patients is a careful evaluation of these important structures. DOs know that the body's structure plays a critical role in its ability to function. They can use their eyes and hands to identify structural problems and to support the body's natural tendency toward health and self-healing.



Osteopathic physicians also use their ears to listen to you and your health concerns. DOs help patients develop attitudes and lifestyles that don't just fight illness but also help prevent disease. Millions of Americans prefer this concerned and compassionate care and have made DOs their physicians for life.



Professional education

To be an osteopathic physician, an individual must graduate from one of the nation's osteopathic medical schools. Each school is accredited by the American Osteopathic Association's Commission on Osteopathic College Accreditation. This accreditation is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.

Typically, applicants to osteopathic medical colleges have four-year undergraduate degrees and have completed specific science courses. Applicants must take the Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT). In addition, osteopathic medical schools typically require applicants to participate in a personal interview.

The curriculum at osteopathic medical schools consists of four years of academic study. Reflecting osteopathic philosophy, the curriculum emphasizes preventive medicine and comprehensive patient care. Throughout the curriculum, osteopathic medical students learn to use osteopathic principles and osteopathic manipulative treatment to diagnose and treat patients.

After completing osteopathic medical college, DOs obtain graduate medical education through internships, residencies and fellowships.

Graduate medical education consists of three to eight years of training, allowing DOs to specialize in any area of medicine, ranging from such primary care disciplines as family medicine, general internal medicine, and pediatrics

to such specialized disciplines as surgery, radiology, oncology, psychiatry, and sports medicine. Approximately 60% of practicing DOs are in primary care.

Licensure

All physicians (both DOs and MDs) must pass a national licensing exam and be licensed by the state in which they will provide medical care. Each state has a licensing board that sets requirements for DOs to practice in that state.

Complete care

DOs are complete physicians. That means they are fully trained and licensed to prescribe medication and to perform surgery. DOs and MDs are the only two types of complete physicians in the United States.

DOs practice in all specialties of medicine from emergency medicine and cardiovascular surgery to psychiatry and geriatrics. However, the majority are family-oriented, primary care physicians. In addition, many DOs practice in small towns, where they often care for entire families and whole communities.

Many DOs incorporate osteopathic manipulative treatment (OMT) into the care they provide. With OMT, osteopathic physicians use their hands to diagnose illness and injury and to encourage your body to heal itself. By combining all other appropriate medical options with OMT, DOs offer their patients the most comprehensive care available in medicine today.