Physician (D.O.)

Overview

Osteopathic physicians (Doctors of Osteopathic medicine, or DO) diagnose illness and injury, prescribe and administer treatment, and advise patients about how to prevent and manage disease. Like M.D.s, they are licensed to diagnose, treat, prescribe, and perform surgery in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

In addition to using all of the tools and technology available to modern medicine, D.O.s have a strongly holistic philosophy and practice osteopathic manipulative medicine - a distinctive system of hands-on diagnosis and treatment which focuses specifically on the musculoskeletal system.

Osteopathic manipulative medicine is an outgrowth of two basic concepts that undergird the osteopathic approach to health:

1. Structure influences function, which means that if there is an imbalance, injury or other problem in one part of the body's structure, it will affect function in that area - and sometimes elsewhere in the body, as well.
2. The body has an innate capacity for self-healing. Thus, the object of osteopathic manipulation is to eliminate or reduce impediments to proper structure and function, in order to promote the body's own self-healing mechanisms.

Approximately 50% of all D.O.s practice general or family medicine, general internal medicine, or general pediatrics. The rest specialize in a wide range of practice areas, including emergency medicine, anesthesiology, obstetrics and gynecology, psychiatry, and surgery.

There are approximately 54,000 osteopathic physicians in the United States, and 25 osteopathic medical schools (http://www.aacom.org/colleges/). In addition, several new schools of osteopathic medicine currently are being built and will be admitting students within the next couple of years.

Working Conditions

Osteopathic physicians are more likely than allopathic physicians to become primary care providers and have a strong history of serving rural and underserved populations.

Many physicians work in small private offices or clinics, often assisted by a small staff of nurses and other administrative personnel. Increasingly, physicians practice in groups or healthcare organizations that provide back-up coverage and allow for more time off. These physicians often work as part of a team coordinating care for a population of patients; they are less independent than solo practitioners of the past.

Academic Requirements

The minimum educational requirement for entry into medical school is 3 years of college, although most applicants have at least a bachelor's degree, and many have advanced degrees. For an overview of typical prerequisites, see the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM) (http://www.aacom.org/) website.

Osteopathic med school applicants must complete the AACOM medical school application (https://aacomas.aacom.org/). This can be accomplished most easily by using the centralized ACOMAS online application service. Applicants also must take the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) (http://www.aamc.org/students/mcat/).

Osteopathic medical students complete 4 years of medical school, plus 3 to 6 years of additional medical training through internships and residencies in their chosen specialties (http://www.aamc.org/students/cim/specialties.htm). After earning their degree, D.O.s also must pass state licensing exams and national boards.

www.explorehealthcareers.org
Note: The cost of earning a degree in medicine is high, but different avenues are available for funding your education. For more information, see the Find Funding (http://www.explorehealthcareers.com/en/FundingSearch.aspx) section of this website. The American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM) has a Financial Aid (http://aacom.org/financialaid/) page that is specifically geared toward funding opportunities for osteopathic medical students.

One last tip: To connect with other osteopathic medical students, check out:

- Student Osteopathic Medical Association (http://www.studentdo.com/)
- Student Doctor Network (http://www.studentdoctor.net/)
- Student National Medical Association (http://www.snma.org/)
- MomMD (http://www.mommd.com/) - association and online magazine for women docs

### Professional Associations

- American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (http://www.aacom.org/)
- American Osteopathic Association (http://www.osteopathic.org/)

### Funding Opportunities

Search for funding opportunities in this field (http://www.explorehealthcareers.org)

### Enrichment Programs

Search for enrichment programs in this field (http://www.explorehealthcareers.org)

### Source

www.aacom.org

### Learn more about this field:

Medicine (http://www.explorehealthcareers.com/en/Field.5.aspx)

- **Average Salary:** $185,000
- **Years in school:** 7 - 10 *
- **Job outlook:** Excellent

* after high school graduation