

Some facts about osteopathic physicians:

- D.O.s are one of the fastest growing segments of health care professionals in the United States. By the year 2020, it is estimated that at least 100,000 osteopathic physicians will be in active medical practice.
- Approximately 65% of practicing D.O.s specialize in the primary care areas of family practice, internal medicine, obstetrics and gynecology, and pediatrics.
- D.O.s represent 6% of the total U.S. physician population.
- Many D.O.s fill a critical need for physicians by practicing in rural and other medically underserved communities.
- Osteopathic physicians have treated US presidents and Olympic athletes. They have contributed to the fight against AIDS and the fight for civil rights. They have held high-ranking positions, such as the surgeon general of the US Army and the administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.



For more information on osteopathic medicine, please visit the AOA's Web site at www.osteopathic.org.

If you are not seeing a D.O. and would like help finding one, please call (866) FIND-A-DO.

If you would like to order additional brochures, please go to www.do-online.org and click on the "Store" link.

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

American Osteopathic Association
142 E. Ontario St.
Chicago, IL 60611-2864



AMERICAN OSTEOPATHIC ASSOCIATION

TREATING OUR FAMILY AND YOURS



Osteopathic Medicine

Osteopathic Medicine

You are more than just the sum of your body parts. That's why doctors of osteopathic medicine (D.O.s) 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 musculo-skeletal 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 D.O.s give patients is a careful evaluation of these important structures. D.O.s 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. D.O.s help patients develop attitudes and lifestyles that don't just fight illness but also help prevent it. Millions of Americans prefer this concerned and compassionate care and have made D.O.s their physicians for life.



Professional Education

To be an osteopathic physician, an individual must be a graduate of 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 complete specific science courses. Applicants must take the Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT). Osteopathic medical schools also require a personal interview to assess a student's interpersonal communication skills.

The curriculum at osteopathic medical schools involves four years of academic study. As a reflection of osteopathic philosophy, the curriculum emphasizes preventive medicine and comprehensive patient care. Throughout the curriculum, medical students learn to use osteopathic principles and techniques to diagnose and treat patients.

After completing osteopathic medical college, many D.O.s serve a one-year internship, gaining hands-on experience in internal medicine, emergency medicine, and family practice, as well as serving electives in core rotations such as obstetrics and gynecology and pediatrics. This experience ensures that osteopathic physicians are first trained as primary care physicians. Internships provide D.O.s with the perspective to see and treat every patient as a whole person.

Today, all D.O.s serve residencies, consisting of two to six years of training. Residencies are available in the primary care disciplines of family practice, internal medicine, obstetrics and gynecology, and pediatrics, as well as other specialties such as surgery, radiology, psychiatry and sports medicine.

Licensure

All physicians (both D.O.s and M.D.s) must pass examinations to obtain state licenses to practice. Each state has a licensing board that sets requirements for D.O.s to practice in that state.

Complete Care

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

D.O.s practice in all specialties of medicine from emergency medicine and cardiovascular surgery to psychiatry and geriatrics. However, D.O.s are trained to be generalists first and specialists second. The majority are family-oriented, primary care physicians. Many D.O.s practice in small towns, where they often care for entire families and whole communities.

D.O.s bring something extra to medicine:

- Osteopathic medical schools emphasize training students to be primary care physicians.
- D.O.s practice a “whole person” approach to medicine. Instead of just treating specific symptoms or illnesses, they regard your body as an integrated whole.
- Osteopathic physicians focus on preventive health care.
- D.O.s receive extra training in the musculoskeletal system—your body’s interconnected system of nerves, muscles and bones that make up two-thirds of your body mass. This training provides osteopathic physicians with a better understanding of the ways that an illness or injury in one part of your body can affect another.
- Osteopathic manipulative treatment (OMT) is incorporated into the training and practice of osteopathic physicians. With OMT, osteopathic physicians use their hands to diagnose illness and injury and to encourage your body’s natural tendency toward good health. By combining all other available medical options with OMT, D.O.s offer their patients the most comprehensive care available in medicine today.



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What is a D.O.?

If you're like most people, you've been going to a physician ever since you were born and perhaps were not aware whether you were seeing a D.O. (osteopathic physician) or an M.D. (allopathic physician). You may not even be aware that there are two types of complete physicians in the United States.

The fact is that both D.O.s and M.D.s are fully qualified physicians licensed to prescribe medication and perform surgery. Is there any difference between these two kinds of physicians? Yes. And no.

D.O.s and M.D.s are alike in many ways:

- Applicants to both D.O. and M.D. medical colleges typically have four-year undergraduate degrees with an emphasis on scientific courses.
- Both D.O.s and M.D.s complete four years of basic medical education.
- After medical school, both D.O.s and M.D.s obtain graduate medical education through such programs as internships and residencies. This training typically lasts three to six years and prepares D.O.s and M.D.s to practice a specialty.
- Both D.O.s and M.D.s can choose to practice in any specialty area of medicine—such as pediatrics, family practice, psychiatry, surgery or obstetrics.



- D.O.s and M.D.s must pass comparable examinations to obtain state licenses.
- D.O.s and M.D.s both practice in fully accredited and licensed health care facilities.
- Together, D.O.s and M.D.s enhance the state of health care available in America.

D.O.s, however, belong to a separate yet equal branch of American medical care. It is the ways that D.O.s and M.D.s are different that can bring an extra dimension to your family's health care.

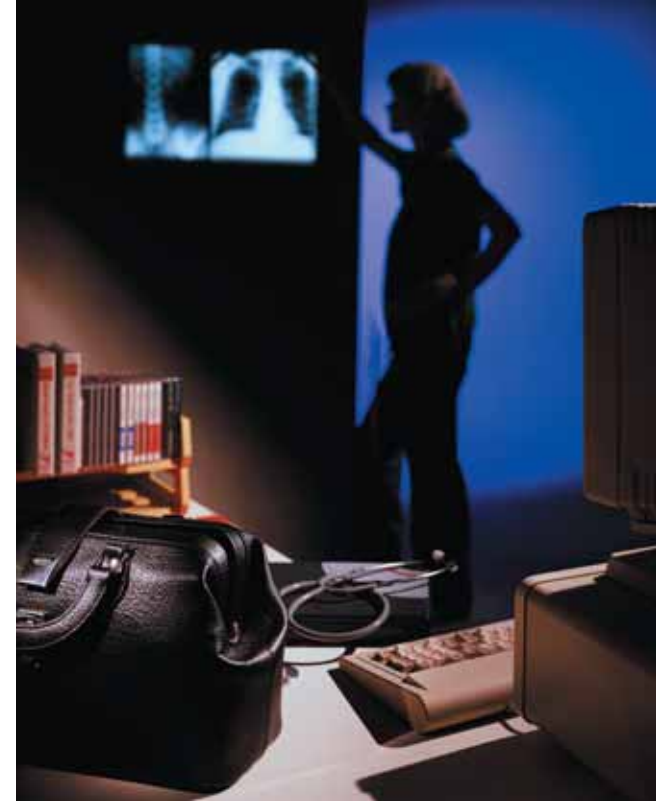
More Than a Century of Unique Care

Osteopathic medicine is a unique form of American medical care that was started in 1874 by Andrew Taylor Still, M.D., D.O. Dr. Still was dissatisfied with the effectiveness of 19th century medicine. He believed that many of the medications of his day were useless or even harmful. Dr. Still was one of the first in his time to study the attributes of good health so that he could better understand the process of disease.



In response, Dr. Still developed a philosophy of medicine based on ideas that date back to Hippocrates, the father of medicine. That philosophy focuses on the unity of all body parts. Dr. Still identified the musculoskeletal system as a key element of health. He recognized the body's ability to heal itself and stressed preventive medicine, eating properly and keeping fit.

Dr. Still pioneered the concept of "wellness" more than 130 years ago. In today's terms, D.O.s evaluate each patient's personal health risks—such as smoking, high blood pressure, excessive cholesterol levels, stress and other lifestyle factors. In coordination with prescribing appropriate medical treatment, osteopathic physicians act as teachers to help patients take more responsibility for their well-being and to change unhealthy patterns.



21st Century, Frontier Medicine

Just as Dr. Still pioneered osteopathic medicine in 1874, today's osteopathic physicians serve as modern-day medical pioneers.

They continue the tradition of bringing health care to areas of greatest need:

- Approximately 65% of practicing osteopathic physicians specialize in primary care areas, such as pediatrics, family practice, obstetrics and gynecology, and internal medicine.
- Many D.O.s fill a critical need for physicians by practicing in rural and other medically underserved communities.

Today osteopathic physicians continue to be on the cutting edge of medicine. D.O.s are able to combine today's medical technology with their ears, to listen caringly to their patients; their eyes, to see their patients as whole persons; and their hands, to diagnose and treat injury and illness.