

Allopathic Physician (MD)

■ Job Description

The physician is responsible for the diagnosis of disease or injury and the prescription of treatment. The physician may carry out the treatment or may delegate such tasks to other health care professionals who work under his or her supervision.

Some physicians such as radiologists or pathologists work mainly in hospitals and have relatively little patient contact. Their duties may emphasize diagnosis, rather than prescription and treatment. Other physicians such as pediatricians or psychiatrists work in an office-based private practice, but with a limited range of patients or ailments. Others, like the surgeon, specialize in one type of treatment.

The family practitioner provides continuing and comprehensive patient care within the context of the patient's family and community environment. Special emphasis is placed on preventative medicine and behavioral science. An especially broad range of medical knowledge must be combined with great sensitivity and skills in interpersonal communication.

Other physicians are not involved in the practice of medicine and have no direct patient contact. Physicians in administrative positions use their knowledge of medicine to plan and direct the operation of a health science school or hospital. Physicians involved in research use their laboratory skills and scientific knowledge to study life and disease processes.

A physician's tasks vary among clinical settings because of the differences in staffing. In a private office, the physician may have only a secretary and a nurse to share the workload. In a hospital, physicians share the responsibility for treating the patient with nurses, medical assistants, therapists, technicians, technologists, and other health professionals. In research, education, and administration, a physician's responsibilities are shared with many other professionals.

■ Job Settings

Most physicians are in private practice. They spend their time in an office, an ambulatory care clinic, or a

hospital, caring for patients. A variety of opportunities in research, teaching, and government agencies dealing with public health are also open to physicians. They can be on the staff of a hospital, medical school, extended-care facility, or health maintenance organization (HMO). A partial list of specialty training areas includes anesthesiology, cardiology, dermatology, emergency medicine, family practice, gastroenterology, general practice, internal medicine, neurology, obstetrics and gynecology, ophthalmology, otolaryngology, pathology, pediatrics, physical medicine and rehabilitation, psychiatry, radiology, surgical specialties, and urology.

■ Projected Need

Employment of physicians in Illinois and nationwide is expected to grow at an average rate through 2010. Growth in this occupation will be due in part to technological advances that allow more medical problems to be treated. In addition, the number of older people is expected to increase rapidly. Older people are more likely to need medical care. As the population grows, demand for physicians will increase.

Demand will be strong for general and family doctors. The number of physicians in private practice will drop as more doctors join group practices. Physicians who are willing to move to rural and low-income areas should have little trouble finding a job.

In Illinois, there were 14,980 people employed in this medium-sized occupation in 2000. This figure also includes physicians who work as psychiatrists, anesthesiologists, and surgeons.

■ Salaries

Once an individual finishes undergraduate education, followed by four years of medical school and three to seven years in postgraduate training (residency), he or she may begin to pay off the large debts that most medical students incur for their education. The earning potential for physicians is among the highest in all professions. The actual amount depends on the physician's choice of specialty and job setting.

Nationally, the median wage for physicians after expenses is about \$160,000 per year. Wages after

expenses for physicians in different areas of medicine are given below:

| Medical Specialty | Median Annual Wage |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| General practitioner | \$130,000 |
| Internist | \$140,000 |
| Obstetrician and gynecologist | \$200,000 |
| Pediatrician | \$126,000 |

■ **Related Careers**

Students who complete a premedical curriculum have a large number of health career options open to them, depending on their academic interests and abilities. Dentistry, podiatry, optometry, pharmacy, chiropractic, osteopathy, and veterinary medicine require the same basic math and science course work for admission. Students with a background in the basic sciences may also work in sales in a pharmaceutical company.

■ **Differences in Training**

There are two public and five private medical schools in Illinois. The University of Illinois accepts half their freshman class from Cook County and half from outside Cook County. Their freshman class is divided between Chicago and Urbana. Those students that choose Urbana may complete their medical education at the University of Illinois in Urbana, Peoria, or Rockford. Southern Illinois University accepts most of their students from downstate. Students complete their freshman year in Carbondale and the final three years in Springfield.

■ **Related Educational Programs**

The programs of study listed below are the recommended areas of study to pursue for this occupation. Clicking on these will lead to files that show in-state and national schools that offer these programs.

The following link(s) will take you to CIS for more information. CIS requires an ID and password that can be obtained at <http://cis.ilworkinfo.com/loginhelp/> You must log into CIS prior to clicking on the links below.

[Medicine](#)
[Pre-Medicine](#)

■ **Credentials**

Physicians must graduate from an accredited medical school, pass all three parts of the National Board Examination, and serve a minimum one-year internship before being licensed to practice.

■ **Advanced Training**

After graduating from medical school, individuals can obtain training in one of the following areas by completing a residency in that area. Most residencies are a *minimum of* three years in length.

Anesthesiology - administration of various forms of anesthetic drugs necessary during surgical operations or diagnosis.

Colon and Rectal Surgery - diagnosis and treatment of disorders or diseases of the lower digestive tract.

Dermatology - diagnosis and treatment of diseases of the skin.

Emergency Medicine - the immediate medical care given to prevent death or further disability for patients in a health crisis; the recognition, stabilization, evaluation, treatment, and disposition of patients in response to acute illness and/or injury.

Family Practice - comprehensive medical care with particular emphasis on the family unit in which the physician's continuing responsibility for health care is not limited by the patient's age or sex nor by a particular organ system or disease entity.

Internal Medicine - diagnosis and treatment of diseases of adults-personal, primary, secondary, and tertiary care-including the subspecialties of allergy and immunology, cardiovascular disease, endocrinology and metabolism, gastroenterology, hematology, infectious disease, oncology, nephrology, pulmonary disease, and rheumatology.

Neurological Surgery - diagnosis and surgical treatment of the brain, the spinal cord, and nerve disorders.

Neurology - diagnosis and treatment of disorders affecting the nervous system.

Obstetrics and Gynecology - care of women during and immediately following pregnancy and the diagnosis and treatment of diseases of the female reproductive organs.

Ophthalmology - diagnosis and treatment, including surgery, of diseases or defects of the eye.

Orthopedic Surgery - diagnosis and medical or surgical treatment of diseases, fractures, and deformities of the bones and joints.

Otolaryngology - diagnosis and treatment, including surgery, of diseases of the ear, nose, and throat.

Pathology - study and interpretation of changes in organs, tissues, and cells as well as alterations in body chemistry.

Pediatrics - prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of childhood and adolescent diseases.

Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation - diagnosis of disease or injury in the various systems and areas of the body and treatment by means of physical procedures, as well as the treatment and restoration of the convalescent and physically handicapped patient.

Plastic Surgery - provision of corrective and reparative surgery to restore deformed or mutilated parts of the body or improve facial or body features.

Preventative Medicine - prevention of disease and promotion of health through epidemiological studies and public health measures.

Psychiatry - diagnosis and treatment of emotional disturbances and mental disorders.

Radiology - diagnosis and treatment of disease through the use of x-ray, ultrasound, magnetic, and nuclear energy.

Surgery - diagnosis and treatment of disease, injury, or deformity by manual or operative procedures.

Thoracic Surgery - diagnosis and operative treatment of diseases of the heart, lungs, or large blood vessels within the chest.

Urology - diagnosis and treatment of diseases and disorders of the kidneys, bladder, ureter and urethra, and the male reproductive organs.

■ Resources

American Medical Association
515 N. State Street
Chicago, IL 60610
Phone: 312.464.5600
<http://www.ama-assn.org>
Under the "Physicians" button, select "Medical Education." Then select "Becoming a Physician."

Association of American Medical Colleges
Section for Student Services
2450 N. St. NW
Washington, DC 20037-1126
Phone: 202.828.0400
<http://www.aamc.org>