

Osteopathic Physician (DO)

■ Job Description

Doctors of Osteopathy (DOs), like doctors of allopathic medicine (MDs), are concerned with the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of human illness, disease, and injury. DOs may prescribe drugs, perform surgery, and selectively use all accepted scientific modalities to maintain and restore health. In addition to encompassing general medicine practices, osteopathy also focuses on the function of the musculoskeletal system in health and disease. There is an emphasis on the relationship between body structure and organic functioning, which requires a thorough understanding of anatomy and the development of special skills in recognizing and correcting structural problems through manipulative therapy. DOs use structural diagnosis and manipulative therapy along with other more traditional forms of diagnosis and treatment.

Among active DOs, about 48% provide primary health care to individuals and families; the remaining 52% are specialists who practice in fields such as internal medicine, surgery, psychiatry, and obstetrics.

■ Job Settings

DOs are more likely than MDs to practice in small cities and towns and in rural areas. In many communities, DOs are the principal providers of health care. Osteopathic physicians locate chiefly in states that have osteopathic schools and hospitals. In 2002, about one-half of active DOs practiced in six states: Florida, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Texas. DOs may also be affiliated with “mixed staff” hospitals, in which the professional staff is composed of both osteopathic and allopathic physicians. DOs are eligible to serve as medical officers in the U.S. Armed Forces, Civil Service Commission, U.S. Public Health Service, and the Veterans' Administration. They may also serve as public health officers, coroners, insurance examiners, and school team physicians.

■ 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.

Although osteopathic medicine is not strictly an “alternative” approach, the field is benefiting from the current interest in these kinds of therapy. In addition to specialized practices in areas such as family medicine, increasing interest in biomedical research at the osteopathic colleges also is expanding opportunities for candidates interested in careers in medical research.

■ Salaries

According to the American Osteopathic Association, DO salaries are comparable to allopathic physician salaries. See salaries under allopathic physician.

■ Related Careers

Allopathic physician, podiatric physician, dentist, veterinarian, physician assistant, and nurse practitioner

■ Differences in Training

To become a DO, an individual attends a school of osteopathic medicine. Entrance to most osteopathic colleges requires four years of undergraduate work, which includes courses in English, biological sciences, physics, and general and organic chemistry, culminating in a bachelor's degree. The DO degree requires four years of study, including two years of basic sciences and two years of clinical work. After graduation, DOs serve a twelve-month rotating internship. Those who wish to become specialists complete an additional two to six years of training (see list under allopathic medicine).

There is only one osteopathic medical school in Illinois-Midwestern University/Chicago College of Osteopathic Medicine. It holds its first two years of classes in Downers Grove and the final two years in Chicago. There are nineteen schools nationwide, including schools in Iowa, Michigan, and Missouri. Contact the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine for a complete list of schools.

■ **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.

[Osteopathic Medicine](#)

■ **Credentials**

DOs are licensed for the full practice of medicine and surgery in all fifty states. Each state determines the tests and procedures for licensing DOs.

■ **Resources**

American Osteopathic Association
142 E. Ontario Street
Chicago, IL 60611
Phone: 800.621.1773
E-mail: info@aoa-net.org
<http://www.aoa-net.org>
Click on "What is a D.O.?"

The association makes available a number of different scholarships in varying amounts to osteopathic students.

American Association of Colleges of
Osteopathic Medicine
5550 Friendship Boulevard, Suite 310
Chevy Chase, MD 20815-7231
Phone: 301.968.4100
<http://www.aacom.org>
Click on "Publications & Surveys." Select "College Information Booklet," then click on "Why Consider a Career in Osteopathic Medicine?"

Scholarships are available to minority students in their first through third year at member colleges of osteopathic medicine. The amounts and number of awards are determined each year.