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Doctor of osteopathic medicine

A doctor of osteopathic medicine (DO) is a physician licensed to practice medicine, perform surgery, and prescribe medicine.

Information

Like all allopathic physicians (or MDs), osteopathic physicians complete 4 years of medical school and can choose to practice in any specialty of medicine. However, osteopathic physicians receive an additional 300 to 500 hours in the study of hands-on manual medicine and the body's musculoskeletal system, called osteopathic manipulative therapy (OMT).

Osteopathic physicians hold to the principle that a person's history of illness and physical trauma are written into the body's structure. The osteopathic physician's highly developed sense of touch allows the physician to feel (palpate) the person's living anatomy (the flow of fluids, motion and texture of tissues, and structural makeup).

Like MDs, osteopathic physicians are licensed at the state level. Osteopathic physicians who wish to specialize may become board certified (in the same manner as MDs) by completing a 2- to 6-year residency within the specialty area, often side-by-side with MDs, and passing the same board certification exams as MDs.

DOs practice in all specialties of medicine, ranging from emergency medicine and cardiovascular surgery to psychiatry and geriatrics. Osteopathic physicians use the same medical and surgical treatments that are used by other medical doctors, but may also incorporate a holistic approach taught during their medical training and use OMT if indicated.

Alternative Names

Osteopathic physician

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Review Date 10/16/2024

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