

Questions & Answers on Osteopathic Medicine

Osteopathic Medicine

1) *What is osteopathic medicine?*

Osteopathic medicine is a complete system of medical care with the philosophy of treating the whole person, not just symptoms. It emphasizes the interrelationship of structure and function, and the appreciation of the body's ability to heal itself.

2) *Is osteopathic medicine considered alternative medicine?*

No, osteopathic medicine is not alternative at all. In fact, osteopathic medicine has a history of more than 130 years. It is a complete system of medical care founded on the philosophy of treating the whole person, not just symptoms. Just like M.D.s, D.O.s (we) are fully trained and licensed medical physicians. Our philosophy of patient-focused care allows Doctors of Osteopathic Medicine, or D.O.s (us) to provide comprehensive health care, while also making the patient feel well cared for.

3) *Who practices osteopathic medicine?*

Doctors of Osteopathic Medicine or D.O.s practice this distinct field of medicine. Other than M.D.s, D.O.s (we) are the only kind of physicians in the United States who are fully trained and licensed to perform surgery and prescribe medication.

4) *What kind of training do D.O.s have?*

Just like M.D.s, D.O.s (we) must attend four years of medical school and complete an internship and residency program. D.O.s (we) take State board exams and are licensed by the State.

5) *What's the difference between D.O. and M.D. training?*

D.O.s (We) receive additional training on how the body's structure and function are connected. For example, a problem in one system might impact a function elsewhere in the body. Overall, it's our philosophy of getting to the root of the problem to make the symptoms go away that makes D.O.s (us) distinct.

6) *Are D.O. services covered by health care insurance?*

Yes, our medical treatments are covered by insurance. D.O.s (We) are fully trained and licensed physicians who can specialize in family practice or in any other field of medicine. Some D.O.s also practice osteopathic manipulative treatment. Check with your physician if you're interested in that specific treatment.

OMT

7) *What is osteopathic manipulative treatment or OMT?*

OMT is a technique in which D.O.s (we) use their hands to help diagnose and treat an injury or illness. It is a non-invasive therapy that can be used with or sometimes in place of medication or surgery. OMT helps treat structural abnormalities allowing the physician to relieve joint restrictions and misalignments. Unlike massage therapy, OMT is a deeper technique that addresses musculoskeletal problems. It is an added expertise that D.O.s (we) can offer patients.

8) *What is OMT used for?*

OMT can be applied for a variety of ailments. In fact, its benefits have been seen in helping to reduce migraines, prevent or relieve back pain, osteoarthritis and asthma.

9) *This sounds like chiropractic medicine.*

Unlike chiropractors, D.O.s (we) are fully trained and licensed medical physicians. Other than M.D.s, D.O.s (we) are the only kind of physicians in the United States licensed to perform surgery and prescribe medications. Remember, we also treat the whole body, not just the musculoskeletal system. Chiropractors focus on the spine. Our training in the relationship between the body's structure and function, and its ability to heal itself is an additional part of our medical training.

D.O. vs. M.D.

10) *What is a D.O.?*

D.O.s (We) are fully licensed osteopathic physicians who specialize in all areas of medicine and whose medical training is founded on the philosophy of treating people, not just symptoms. Other than M.D.s, D.O.s (we) are the only group of physicians in the United States who are fully trained and licensed to perform surgery and prescribe medication.

11) *What makes a D.O. different from a M.D.?*

What makes D.O.s (us) special is their (our) unique philosophy of patient care. Like M.D.s, D.O.s (we) are trained and licensed to perform surgery or prescribe medication, and can specialize in family practice or in any other specific field of medicine. But D.O.s' (our) distinct philosophy is treating the whole person, not just their symptoms. This has been the foundation of our medical training for more than 130 years. D.O.s (We) also receive additional training in the interrelationship of structure and function, and learn appreciation of the body's ability to help heal itself, which D.O.s (we) may use for diagnosis and treatment when appropriate.

12) *Why do you need D.O.s and M.D.s?*

That's like asking why do we both need priests and rabbis. D.O.s and M.D.s can do the same things, but are founded on a different philosophy. Although D.O.'s medical training is similar to that of M.D.'s, we have a distinct philosophy of treating the whole person and not just the symptoms. We also have additional training in osteopathic manipulative treatment, which is a technique that addresses musculoskeletal problems.

D.O. Statistics

13) How many D.O.s are there in the United States?

Currently, there are approximately 56,000 D.O.s nationwide and more than 11,000 osteopathic medical students. Currently, there are 20 Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine that provide instruction for osteopathic medical students at 23 locations nationwide.

14) Do they tend to specialize in one field of medicine?

While D.O.s (we) can specialize in any field of medicine, the majority of D.O.s (us) specialize in primary care. This is due in part to our approach of treating the whole person, not just the symptoms.

15) How can someone find a D.O.?

To find a D.O., call toll-free 1-866-621-1773 or visit our Web site at www.osteopathic.org.