



Doctor of Medicine (MD) and Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (DO): *What's the difference?*



The short answer is that there is not much difference. According to the American Medical Association, a physician is someone who has received either an MD or a DO degree from a school of medicine or of osteopathic medicine. Both MD-granting and DO-granting institutions are considered medical school, and thus require completion of pre-med courses and the MCAT. MDs and DOs can both practice in any specialization of medicine, and receive similar salaries.

However, the education offered is rooted in different histories and philosophies. MDs practice 'allopathic' medicine while DOs practice 'osteopathic' medicine.

The differing schools of thought:

Allopathic Medicine: Allopathic medicine is the mainstream practice that most people think of when they think of Western medical care. This type of practice is generally focused on symptoms and treating disease using pharmaceuticals or physical interventions such as surgery. MDs are more "technoscientific", meaning they are more likely to discuss scientific literature in patient treatment.

Osteopathic Medicine: Osteopathic medicine was established in the late 1800s as part of a movement to reform health care. This type of practice focuses more on preventative measures and reducing the overuse of medications. DOs are more "socioemotional", meaning they are more likely to discuss social, familial, and emotional concerns in patient treatment.

What is the difference in training?

There is very little difference in the actual training for MDs and DOs. While these two ways of practicing medicine were historically at odds with each other, in the present day, the philosophies are more integrated. Medical students receiving an MD still receive training that reflects the more holistic, preventative approach of osteopathic medicine, just as medical students receiving a DO will still learn how to treat disease symptoms using pharmaceuticals, surgery, or other allopathic techniques.

The only real difference is that DOs are also trained in "osteopathic manipulative treatment" (OMT), which is the practice of treating ailments through physical manipulation of bones, muscles, and joints. This involves an extra 300 to 500 hours of training on the musculoskeletal system.

Which type of program should I apply for?

Many students apply to both MD and DO programs, and this can be a good idea. DO programs are typically considered less competitive than MD programs, with DO applicants having a slightly lower average MCAT score. However, in recent years, the acceptance rate for MD programs has occasionally been higher than that of DO programs, so in reality there is little difference between the reputations of either school.

Consider what type of practice you would like to go into: DO schools are more focused on and supportive of primary care, while MD schools tend to be more focused on students entering into a specialty.

MD or DO granting institutions in Ohio:

MD

- Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine
- Cleveland Clinic Lerner College of Medicine
- Northeast Ohio Medical University College of Medicine
- The Ohio State University College of Medicine
- University of Cincinnati College of Medicine
- University of Toledo College of Medicine
- Wright State University Boonshoft School of Medicine

DO

- Ohio University Heritage College of Osteopathic Medicine

As demonstrated by Ohio, there are significantly less colleges of osteopathic medicine in the United States. For a complete list of medical schools in the U.S. (MD or DO), visit:

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_medical_schools_in_the_United_States

Other Questions?

As MD and DO programs both require pre-med courses and completion of the MCAT, refer to our other resources for more information about the application process and becoming a competitive candidate. As a place to start, visit: neurosciencemajor.osu.edu/careers-medicine

For further questions, stop by the advising office during walk-in hours or schedule an appointment with an advisor. Visit neurosciencemajor.osu.edu/appointment for current walk-in hours and appointment scheduling.