DOs bring something extra to medicine

• Osteopathic medical schools emphasize training students to become primary care physicians.

• DOs practice a “whole person” approach to medicine. Instead of just treating you for specific symptoms or illnesses, they regard your body as an integrated whole.

• Osteopathic physicians focus on preventive health care.

• DOs receive extra training in the musculoskeletal system—your body’s interconnected system of nerves, muscles and bones that makes up two-thirds of your body mass. This training provides osteopathic physicians with a better understanding of how an illness or injury in one part of your body can affect another.

• Osteopathic manipulative treatment (OMT) is incorporated into the training and practice of osteopathic physicians. With OMT, osteopathic physicians use their hands to diagnose illness and injury and to encourage your body’s natural tendency toward good health. By combining all other available medical options with OMT, DOs offer their patients the most comprehensive care available in medicine today.

For more information on osteopathic medicine or to find a DO, visit the American Osteopathic Association’s Web site at www.osteopathic.org.

If you would like to order additional brochures, go to www.do-online.org, select the “AOA” tab, and then click the “Store” link.

To order brochures over the phone, call (800) 621-1773, ext. 1.

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If you’re like most people, you’ve been going to physicians ever since you were born and perhaps were not aware that some or all of them were osteopathic physicians, also known as DOs. You may not even be aware that there are two types of complete physicians in the United States—DOs and MDs.

The fact is that both DOs and MDs are fully qualified physicians licensed to prescribe medication and perform surgery. Is there any difference between these two kinds of physicians? Yes and no.

**DOs and MDs are alike in many ways**

- Students entering both DO and MD medical colleges typically have already completed four-year bachelor’s degrees with an emphasis on scientific courses.
- Both DOs and MDs complete four years of basic medical education.
- After medical school, both DOs and MDs obtain graduate medical education through internships, residencies and fellowships. This training lasts three to eight years and prepares DOs and MDs to practice a specialty.
- Both DOs and MDs can choose to practice in any specialty of medicine—such as pediatrics, family medicine, psychiatry, surgery or ophthalmology.

- DOs and MDs must pass comparable examinations to obtain state licenses.
- DOs and MDs both practice in accredited and licensed health care facilities.
- Together, DOs and MDs enhance the state of health care available in the United States.

DOs, however, belong to a separate yet equal branch of American medical care. It is the ways that DOs and MDs are different that can bring an extra dimension to your health care.

**More than a century of unique care**

Osteopathic medicine is a unique form of American medical care that was started in 1874 by Andrew Taylor Still, MD, DO. Dr. Still was dissatisfied with the effectiveness of 19th century medicine. He believed that many of the medications of his day were useless or even harmful. Dr. Still was one of the first in his time to study the attributes of good health so that he could better understand the process of disease.

Dr. Still developed a philosophy of medicine based on ideas that date back to Hippocrates, the father of medicine. That philosophy focuses on the unity of all body parts. Dr. Still identified the musculoskeletal system as a key element of health. He recognized the body’s ability to heal itself, and he stressed preventive medicine, eating properly and keeping fit.

Dr. Still pioneered the concept of “wellness” more than 135 years ago. In today’s terms, DOs evaluate each patient’s health risks—such as smoking, high blood pressure, excessive cholesterol levels and stress. In concert with prescribing appropriate medical treatment, osteopathic physicians act as teachers to help patients take more responsibility for their well-being and to change unhealthy patterns.

**21st century frontier medicine**

Just as Dr. Still pioneered osteopathic medicine in 1874, today’s osteopathic physicians serve as modern-day medical pioneers.

They continue the tradition of bringing health care to where it is needed most:

- Approximately 60% of practicing osteopathic physicians practice in the primary care specialties of family medicine, general internal medicine, pediatrics, and obstetrics and gynecology.
- Many DOs fill a critical need for physicians by practicing in rural and other medically underserved communities.

In addition, these modern-day pioneers practice on the cutting edge of medicine. DOs combine today’s medical technology with their ears to listen caringly to their patients, with their eyes to see their patients as whole persons, and with their hands to diagnose and treat patients for injury and illness.