

Most people are familiar with what an allopathic physician or "MD" is. The training an MD undergoes consists of 4 years of college, leading to a Bachelors Degree (in most cases), followed by a course of Medical Education that is usually 4 years in length. After all of that training, one year of post-graduate training is required in Florida, this is may be done as either the "internship", or is usually done as the first year of a residency program that leads to some form of specialty training such as Internal Medicine, Family Practice, Pediatrics, a surgical specialty, or a subspecialty that tends to concentrate more specifically on one organ system (such as cardiology). To practice a specialty, residency training is required. Most physicians in Florida have done quite a bit more than the single year of post-graduate training that is required in this state. Often, the physician will go the extra step and become Certified by the Board of that specialty, this is accomplished by qualifying to sit for the exam (usually by completing a certified residency program or perhaps by demonstrating time and experience in that field) administered by the College of that Specialty. After passing the exam the physician is "Board Certified", prior to passing, but after completing the residency training, the physician is "Board Eligible".

Not everybody is aware of what an Osteopathic physician has to go through prior to practicing medicine. There is confusion that we are "like a chiropractor", or similar practitioner such as a homeopath, etc. Our training is very similar to what our allopathic brothers go through. We start out in college studying a course of pre-medical training, usually obtaining a Bachelors (or higher) Degree (just as they do). After the initial four years, we take the Medical College Aptitude Test (MCAT) that the allopathic students had to take. If we score high enough and have adequate undergraduate grades we may be fortunate enough to be chosen for admission into a College of Osteopathic Medicine (the criteria and selection process for the allopathic and osteopathic schools are similarly difficult & rigorous). Once admitted, we spend the same 4 years, studying the exact same courses that the allopathic students study. In addition, however, we are also trained in the art of Physical Manipulation. This does not replace any of the curriculum needed to become a physician, it is merely taught in addition to the other studies.

Another difference between the osteopath and allopath often occurs during the first year of post-graduate training. Many (but not all) osteopathic graduates go on to serve in a one year "rotating" osteopathic internship. Unlike the allopathic students who can enter

a residency directly out of medical school, we start our post-graduate training spending time in all of the different specialty and subspecialty areas, including surgical and medical disciplines. This improves the osteopathic interns ability to function as a generalist. He spends an additional year practicing as a physician under supervision of his directors working in various different subspecialties to acquire more expertise in each of the different fields. As alluded to above, some osteopathic graduates enter allopathic post-graduate training without serving in the osteopathic internship. After the osteopathic internship, most interns will then go on to devote additional time studying their specialty of choice in a Residency, after which they may become Board Certified. Graduates of an osteopathic school can complete their training in either an allopathic or osteopathic residency. The Certifying Board will then be part of that school, thus an osteopathic physician can be certified by an allopathic specialty board if the residency was an allopathic residency, or by an osteopathic board if an osteopathic residency was completed.

Unlike Chiropractors, Osteopaths are actually physicians. We have trained in a Medical College, have undergone at least an internship, and usually further post-graduate training, are licensed as physicians, can prescribe medication, perform surgical procedures, specialize in any area of care that we choose, we practice in hospitals and enjoy all of the privileges and responsibilities of the allopathic physicians.

Unlike the allopathic physicians, our training from the first day of medical school encourages us to enter a "Primary Care" specialty (yes, they are now considered specialties) such as Family Practice, Internal Medicine or Pediatrics. The emphasis on Primary Care is further stressed during the osteopathic internship year. Our training in Physical Manipulation is an additional tool that we have to provide care for our patients. It is this training that confuses many people, making them think of us as chiropractors. Unfortunately, not every osteopath chooses to use this tool, but all have been taught the techniques in order to graduate from their medical school.