

Do You Know... is your Doctor an M.D. or a D.O.?

The next time you visit a hospital or doctor's office, try to spot the physicians' credentials. Are they M.D.s or D.O.s (osteopathic physicians)? While there are similarities between the two types of doctors, there are also differences.

“Many people have been going to a doctor since they were born, but are unaware that there are two types of physicians able to prescribe medicine and perform surgery,” says William Morrone, D.O., an osteopathic family practitioner from Saginaw who specializes in addiction and pain management. “That is why I always explain my ‘D.O.’ credentials to my patients.”

Both D.O.s and M.D.s complete an undergraduate Bachelor's degree followed by four years of medical education. D.O.s receive their medical degrees from one of 25 osteopathic medical schools at 28 locations throughout the United States. Osteopathic medical schools emphasize training students to be primary care physicians first. Consequently, upon graduation osteopathic physicians serve a year-long rotating internship in the primary care areas. After the completion of this internship, they may choose to specialize in any area of medicine, requiring an additional two to six years of residency training. Many D.O.s even advance their training with a subspecialty fellowship in such highly specialized fields as allergy, geriatrics, spine and trauma surgery, and facial plastic surgery, just to name a few.

D.O.s also receive additional training in the musculoskeletal system—the body's interconnected system of nerves, muscles and bones that make up two-thirds of its mass. This training provides osteopathic physicians with a better understanding of the ways that an injury or illness in one part of the body can affect another. This education also promotes the “whole person” approach to medicine that osteopathic physicians practice.

“As an osteopathic physician, I regard the body as an integrated whole, not a sum of parts,” says Dr. Morrone. This “whole person” philosophy will often lead an osteopathic physician to investigate the patient's lifestyle to distinguish if any outside elements are contributing to an ailment.

“When I examine a patient, I may spend several minutes speaking with him or her about their work or home environment before I even begin the physical examination,” notes Dr. Morrone. “These are things that are often overlooked by the patient but usually play a significant role in their general health.”

D.O.s use an additional treatment tool called Osteopathic Manipulative Treatment (OMT). With OMT, D.O.s use their hands to help diagnose and treat injury and illness and to encourage the body's natural tendency toward good health.

“While many people consider OMT a tool for back pain, it can be used to help treat many ailments,” Dr. Morrone clarifies. “From migraines to ear pain, to prenatal

care, or even simply examining a patient for general health—OMT has many helpful effects.”

Today there are more than 7,200 D.O.s in Michigan and more than 64,000 nationwide who combine today’s medical technology with their ears, to listen caringly to their patients; their eyes, to see their patients as whole persons; and their hands, to diagnose and treat injury as well as illness. March 1-7, 2009, the Michigan Osteopathic Association (MOA) in conjunction with the American Osteopathic Association will observe National Osteopathic Medicine (NOM) Week. NOM is an annual event that brings supporters of the osteopathic medical profession together to focus on one common goal – increasing awareness of osteopathic medicine and osteopathic physicians (D.O.s) in communities across the country.

For more information on osteopathic medicine and how to locate an osteopathic physician in your area, contact the MOA at (800) 657-1556 or www.mi-osteopathic.org.

Physician Bio

William Morrone, D.O.

Dr. William Morrone is a doctor of osteopathic medicine, so you will see D.O. after his name. He is a graduate of the Michigan State University College of Osteopathic Medicine and has been a primary care physician for eight years. Currently, Dr. Morrone works in several capacities including as a family practitioner medical resident trainer at Synergy Medical Education Alliance of Saginaw, director of Hospice of Michigan, Saginaw, consulting liaison addictionologist at *Wolverine Human Services* and deputy medical examiner for Bay County. He is dually board certified in family medicine and pain management.

“An osteopathic physician has an obligation to the history of medicine to be an educator and to teach at every opportunity. Above all, if I am going use my osteopathic training and approach my patients with the ‘whole person’ philosophy, I must ask questions that go to the heart and soul of the person – what is the relationship with their family, what do they do at work, what are their health risks, and what are they expecting out of me? Education and communication are key components to the success of all medicine and I have found that it all begins with listening. “

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