

How DOs, MDs, and DCs Compare In Philosophical Backgrounds and Training

A General Overview

While health care practitioners are very familiar with the similarities and differences between their particular treatment approaches, many times the public is not. The following table is provided to help give a general overview of the training and treatment philosophies of these three professional disciplines.

| Physician | Osteopathic (DO) | Allopathic (MD) | Chiropractic (DC) |
|----------------------------------|--|--|---|
| Undergraduate training | 3-4 years of required. | 3-4 years required. | 2-4 years required. |
| Professional School Training | 4 years of required. | 4 years required ¹ . | 3-4 years required. |
| Hospital Internship | 1 year rotating internship required. | Required, but incorporated into the first year of residency. | Not required. |
| Hospital Residency | Hospital residency optional, but required in most states. Total hospital training=3-8 years. | Hospital residency optional, but required in most states. Total hospital training=3-8 years. | Not applicable. |
| Medication prescribing rights | Can prescribe controlled substances. | Can prescribe controlled substances. | Cannot prescribe controlled substances. |
| Licensed to perform surgery | Yes. | Yes. | No. |
| Continuing education requirement | 42 hours per year (125 hours in a 3 year period). | 25 hours per year. | 0-25 hours per year depending on the state. |
| Diagnostic Tests | Licensed to prescribe and perform all diagnostic tests. | Licensed to prescribe and perform all diagnostic tests. | Licensed to prescribe and perform limited diagnostic tests ² . |

| | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|--|
| Manual Medicine Training‡ | Includes all parts of the body: spine, joints, connective tissue (including fascia) ³ from head to toe. | No formal training. | Mainly spinal manipulation ³ . |
| Founder(s) of principles of practice | A. T. Still, (MD from Kansas State University) whose "whole person" approach emphasized treatment of health and disease prevention as well as cure. | German trained physicians (MDs) who viewed the body as being comprised primarily of distinctive and functionally separate parts, who emphasized treating disease symptoms through drugs and surgery. | DD Palmer (no medical background) whose approach to disease treatment was manipulation of just the spine. His philosophy was that this could effectively address 95% of all illness. |

‡Please note that any fully licensed physician (MD or DO) is eligible to take osteopathic courses. A number of MDs have become very proficient at practicing osteopathy, but only after many years of training and hard work.

‡There are some accelerated MD programs for college eligible high school graduates that combine undergraduate and medical school education into a 6 year program.

‡The type of diagnostic tests that a DC is allowed to perform vary from state to state, but the license to perform diagnostic tests is "limited" compared to DOs and MDs in all states.

‡The number of hours presented varies, depending upon the school.

Naturopaths and doctors of oriental medicine are not included in the above chart as they are not licensed in all states.

Craniosacral practitioners are not included in the above chart as there are neither educational requirements nor licensing.

This chart is based on an article from Osteopathic Newsletters, written and published by [Laurie Jones](#), The Jones Group, 2254 San Diego Ave., San Diego, CA. Portions of the above chart copyright © 1992 Laurie Jones, The Jones Group, 2254 San Diego Ave., San Diego, CA.

<http://www.osteohome.com>