



PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS

JOB DESCRIPTION

Physicians and surgeons serve a fundamental role in our society and have an effect upon all our lives. They diagnose illnesses and prescribe and administer treatment for people suffering from injury or disease. Physicians examine patients, obtain medical histories, and order, perform, and interpret diagnostic tests. They counsel patients on diet, hygiene, and preventive health care. There are two types of physicians: M.D.—Doctor of Medicine—and D.O.—Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine. M.D.s also are known as allopathic physicians. While both M.D.s and D.O.s may use all accepted methods of treatment, including drugs and surgery, D.O.s place special emphasis on the body's musculoskeletal system, preventive medicine, and holistic patient care. D.O.s are more likely than M.D.s to be primary care specialists although they can be found in all specialties. About half of D.O.s practice general or family medicine, general internal medicine, or general pediatrics.

EXPERIENCE & SKILLS

People who wish to become physicians must have a desire to serve patients, be self-motivated, and be able to survive the pressures and long hours of medical education and practice. Physicians also must have a good bedside manner, emotional stability, and the ability to make decisions in emergencies. Prospective physicians must be willing to study throughout their career in order to keep up with medical advances.

EDUCATION & TRAINING

Formal education and training requirements for physicians are among the most demanding of any occupation—4 years of undergraduate school, 4 years of medical school, and 3 to 8 years of internship and residency, depending on the specialty selected. A few medical schools offer combined undergraduate and medical school programs that last 6 rather than the customary 8 years.

Premedical students must complete undergraduate work in physics, biology, mathematics, English, and inorganic and organic chemistry. Students also take courses in the humanities and the social sciences. Some students volunteer at local hospitals or clinics to gain practical experience in the health professions. Acceptance to medical school is highly competitive. Applicants must submit transcripts, scores from the Medical College Admission Test, and letters of recommendation. Schools also consider an applicant's character, personality, leadership qualities, and participation in extracurricular activities. Most schools require an interview with members of the admissions committee.

SALARIES

Family Practice: \$156,010
Obstetrics: \$247,348
Pediatrics: \$161,331

Psychiatry: \$180,000
Surgery: \$282,504

Anesthesiology: \$321,686
Internal Medicine: \$166,420

EMPLOYMENT & ADVANCEMENT PROSPECTS

Physicians and surgeons held about 567,000 jobs in 2004; approximately 1 out of 7 was self-employed and not incorporated. About 60 percent of salaried physicians and surgeons were in office of physicians, and 16 percent were employed by private hospitals. Employment of physicians and surgeons is projected to grow faster than average for all occupations through the year 2014 due to continued expansion of health care industries.

RELATED OCCUPATIONS

- Physician Assistants
- Registered Nurses
- Optometrists
- Veterinarians
- Dentists
- Chiropractors
- Podiatrists
- Pharmacists

REFERENCES

American Medical Association, 515 N. State St., Chicago, IL 60610. Internet: <http://www.ama-assn.org>

American Osteopathic Association, Division of Communications, 142 East Ontario St., Chicago, IL 60611. Internet: <http://www.osteopathic.org>