

Doctors belong to a complex and challenging profession, but have a simple goal: to treat and heal people who are suffering from injury or disease. As part of their practice, doctors examine patients, evaluate medical histories, perform and interpret medical tests, make medical diagnoses, and prescribe and administer treatments that may include surgery, drugs, physical therapies, or other types of treatment. There are two types of physicians: MDs (**Doctors of Medicine**, also known as allopathic physicians) and DOs (**Doctors of Osteopathic Medicine**). Both can perform the full range of medical services for patients, including surgery and drug therapy.

**General or Family practitioners** have always been common in the medical field, but are more prevalent than ever today due to the dominance of managed care. Primary-care physicians generally specialize in internal medicine, family medicine, pediatrics, or geriatrics. Because general practitioners have become increasingly responsible for their patients, they must be able to recognize a wider range of conditions, to recommend appropriate treatments, and to refer patients to specialists.

**Medical Specialists** focus on a specific area of the body, a particular type of illness or condition, or a certain procedure. **Body-related specialties** include cardiopulmonary medicine (heart and lungs), gynecology (female reproductive system), dermatology (skin), immunology (immune system), endocrinology (endocrine glands), gastroenterology (digestive organs), hematology (blood, spleen and lymph glands), hepatology (liver and biliary tract), neurology (brain, spinal cord and nervous system), ophthalmology (eye), otolaryngology (ear, respiratory and upper alimentary systems), rheumatology (joints, muscles, bones and tendons), and urology (adrenal gland and genitourinary system). **Condition-related specialists** focus on allergy (reactions to irritating agents), oncology (cancer and other benign or malignant tumors), toxicology (poisoning cases), and obstetrics (pregnancy, labor, and delivery). **Procedure-related specialties** include anesthesiology (managing patients' pain and consciousness during and after operations and other procedures), radiology (using radiation to diagnose and treat patients), and surgery.

**Physician Assistants (PAs)** offer health-care services under the supervision of physicians. Depending on state regulations, they may examine patients, order tests and x-rays, make diagnoses, treat injuries, and prescribe medications.

### Transfer Information:

Physicians must obtain a Bachelor's degree and then go on to medical school. Physician Assistant programs can be taken at a Bachelor's level.

### Additional Information:

- Careers in Medicine: [www.aamc.org/students/considering/careers.htm](http://www.aamc.org/students/considering/careers.htm)

