

So what is a D.O. anyway?

D.O. stands for Doctor of Osteopathy, and I am proud to say that those initials follow my name. Osteopathic physicians are fully licensed doctors who practice all forms of medicine in the United States. In Montrose we currently have D.O. s who specialize in orthopedics, pediatrics, otolaryngology, (ear, nose and throat), obstetrics and gynecology, and family medicine.

There are currently 25 Osteopathic Medical Schools in the United States, with more than 60,000 graduates in practice. The program is four years long just like traditional medical schools. The curriculum focuses on learning the basics of medicine such as diagnosing and treating illnesses with traditional methods such as x-rays and medications. It also gives students in-depth training in the diagnosis and treatment of the body through hands on assessment and musculoskeletal techniques. After medical school, osteopathic physicians go on to residency programs in all areas of primary care and specialty fields, most of which are three years long.

Osteopathic philosophy is geared towards optimizing health and preventing illness, and the realization that there are many forces that affect the current state of our bodies. For example the genetics we were born with, the environment in which we were raised, the foods we eat and our activity levels all impact how well our bodies are in or out of balance. Equally important are the sum of the physical and emotional experiences that we have had in our lives that affect the way that our bodies feel today. Having a severe car accident at age 18 may not bother a person at that age very much, but years down the road arthritis might set in, resulting in pain, lack of mobility and resulting weight gain. Emotional traumas such as physical or emotional abuse can be dormant in the mind and then something triggers them to show up again many years later.

Many students in osteopathic schools have had previous careers in medicine and many other fields. For me osteopathic medicine was a natural transition after working as a pediatric nurse, which helped shape my career as a Family Physician and in caring for patients from a few hours old to patients at the end of their lives.

Dr. Julie Devita-Bailey specializes in Family Medicine and Geriatrics and is also the Medical Director of Alpine Hospice. She is a member of the Active Medical Staff at Montrose Memorial Hospital.

To learn more about Osteopathic Medicine, go to www.osteopathic.org.