

T H E **J O B** C E N T E R

**PHYSICIAN**



Physicians today specialize in many areas — from orthopedic surgery to family practice — and spend up to eight years training for their careers

To become physicians, medical students must learn many skills, including how to combat an infection or fix a broken arm. They must also learn to heal with their words.

Medicine is both a science and an art: It takes science to know which drugs to prescribe or how to read an X-ray, but medicine also means communicating with patients, often when they are in very tough situations. A good physician can both treat an illness and help the patient understand the recommended course of treatment.

There are two types of physicians – MDs, or doctors of medicine; and ODs, or doctors of osteopathy. Osteopaths and medical doctors use the same methods to treat patients, but osteopaths believe good health relies on proper alignment of the body's musculoskeletal system.

Most medical doctors specialize in a particular health-care area, such as primary care, orthopedics,

pediatrics or cardiology. Primary care physicians, including family practitioners, pediatricians and internists, are the first doctors people see for ailments. Osteopaths are usually primary care physicians.

According to the U.S. Labor Department, about seven out of 10 physicians work in private practice, including clinics and HMOs. Others are employed in hospitals owned by the federal government. No matter where they are employed, doctors, especially early in their practices, work long hours and are often on call at night.

Medical schooling is expensive, long and grueling; and admission to these schools is competitive. College students should have strong biology backgrounds, although they don't have to major in biology – or even pre-med. To become more familiar with health-care careers, students should also volunteer at clinics or hospitals.

**Profile**

**Dr. Vishal Sharma, Bradenton**



Dr. Vishal Sharma knew he wanted to become a doctor at an early age. Studying medicine is practically a family tradition as his family comes from a long line of doctors. Raised to view medicine as a noble profession, he decided to become a doctor at age 15, and by the time he was 18, the study of medicine had become his passion.

Today Dr. Sharma is a physician with privileges at Manatee Memorial Hospital. He loves helping people feel better and finds great satisfaction in his work. As a M.D., Dr. Sharma is responsible for managing patient care and communication. He is a firm believer in the power of compassion and understanding as well as medication to achieve positive medical outcomes.

Dr. Sharma has been practicing in the Bradenton area for eight years. He attended medical school at

the University of Dehlia in India, eventually immigrating to the U.S. in 1993. He completed his residency in Brooklyn, New York and has been board-certified in Internal Medicine since 1996.

Staying on top of the latest information is an ongoing challenge for any physician. Dr. Sharma devotes much time to studying diseases and treatment options and familiarizing himself with new technology. He is impressed with the advancement of technology that allows non-invasive procedures and testing to be conducted in an office setting that only a few years ago would have required in-hospital treatments and/or stays.

Dr. Sharma is quick to note that technology must be complemented with good "old-school medicine" and personal attention to patients. He recommends a medical career to students who are willing to invest a lot of hard work and are ready to meet a challenge.

**SKILLS REQUIRED**

Physicians should possess the skills and knowledge of their specialties as well as the abilities to be compassionate and relate to patients.

**WHERE/HOW TO GET TRAINING**

**Schooling**  
Education and training is the same for most physicians, no matter what their specialties, up through the third year of medical school. The following requirements are for most students:  
Most applicants to U.S. medical schools must have at least a bachelor's degree. Applicants must take the Medical College Admission Test, or MCAT, usually in their junior year of college. Schools require transcripts and might require interviews and letters of recommendation for admittance.  
Students should also have some experience in the medical profession, such as volunteering at a hospital.  
Medical school graduates must take the U.S. Medical Licensing Exam, the third part of which is given during residency. Board certification requires up to seven years in a residency, depending on the specialty. Board exams are

administered after the residency is complete or after one or two years of practice.

**Residency**  
After graduation from medical school, students spend up to seven years as residents. As residents, students learn about and practice their chosen medical specialties. To decide where students will do their residencies, they submit their preferences to the National Resident Matching Program in Washington, which uses a computer to match students and residencies.

**Financial Aid**  
Grants, scholarships, loans, and work/study programs are available for postsecondary students. For most of this aid, high school seniors must submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid, which is available from high school guidance offices and higher education financial aid offices.

**For more information on federal financial aid programs, call (800) 4FEDAID**

**FUTURE JOB OPPORTUNITIES**

The U.S. Labor Department expects employment of physicians to grow faster than other occupations through 2008 because of continued growth in the health

care industry. Job prospects for family practitioners in rural areas are especially good, as are those for geriatric and preventive care physicians because of the growth and aging of the population.

**WORK ENVIRONMENT**

Physicians usually wear dress clothes and lab coats in an office environment or while visiting patients in a hospital. In surgery, they wear protective clothing.

**RESOURCES - HOW TO FIND OUT MORE**

**BOOK:**  
*Becoming a Physician: A Practical and Creative Guide to Planning a Career in Medicine* by Jennifer Danek and Marita Danek

**ONLINE:**  
American Osteopathic Association  
www.aoa-net.org

**GENERAL:**  
American Medical Association  
515 N. State St.  
Chicago, IL 60610  
800-AMA-3211 (262-3211)  
www.ama-assn.org

**YOU HAVE THE POWER**

The Job Center page is published every Thursday in The Herald. Provided by Newspaper In Education - Kristin Lamphron, Education & Special Projects Manager (941) 748-0411 ext. 5031. Creative Design KRP Inc. and Darren Falterman, Digital Media Specialist. © Knight-Ridder Productions, Inc.

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JOBS IN THIS FIELD			
Job titles	Place of work	Kind of work	Average salary*
Pediatrician	Doctor's office, clinic, hospital	Diagnoses and treats the illnesses of children and teens. Performs routine checkups, visits patients in hospitals, communicates with patients and their parents.	\$120,000-\$160,000
Family practitioner	Doctor's office, clinic, hospital	Diagnoses and treats the illnesses of patients of all ages. Refers sick patients to specialists. Performs routine check-ups. Monitors health histories.	\$120,000-\$160,000
Anesthesiologist	Hospital, clinic	Keeps patients unconscious and stable during surgery. Evaluates proper anesthetic medicines.	\$240,000+
Surgeons	Hospital, doctor's office	Treats diseases, injuries and deformities by invasive methods using instruments and appliances.	\$240,000+

\*Salaries may vary depending on specialty, region, and experience. Sources: Chronicle Guidance Publications and Occupational Outlook Handbook.