

WWAMI CENTER FOR HEALTH WORKFORCE STUDIES

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Data Snapshot

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Current Osteopathic Physician Workforce in the WWAMI States

Introduction: As the only medical school for the five-state Washington, Wyoming, Alaska, Montana, and Idaho (WWAMI) region, the University of Washington School of Medicine has a mission to train physicians for the Northwest, with a particular commitment to primary care. A new osteopathic medical school is opening in Washington and will introduce more osteopathic physicians into the Pacific Northwest.

More than one-third of the WWAMI region is rural and tends to be medically underserved. Across the United States, osteopathic physicians (DOs) have historically been more likely to choose primary care careers and were more likely to practice in rural areas.

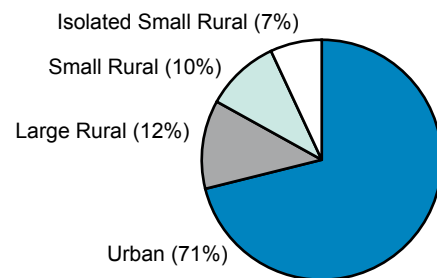
This data snapshot describes the distribution of osteopathic physicians in the WWAMI states as of 2005 and will provide a baseline for examination of the distribution and practice characteristics of osteopathic physicians in the future.

Methods: Using data from the 2005 American Osteopathic Association (AOA) Masterfile, we examined clinically active osteopathic physicians currently practicing in the WWAMI region. Physicians' locations were determined by reported ZIP code and reflected the physician's primary practice location. The ZIP codes were also mapped to Rural-Urban Commuting Areas (RUCA).

Results: We identified 663 DO physicians currently practicing in one of the five WWAMI states. Of these, 21% (138) are women. The mean age of the DO physicians was 49.6 years.

The percentage of WWAMI DOs in small rural and isolated small rural areas is roughly double the national DO percentage and four times higher than the national MD distribution. Only 4 DO physicians (less than 1%) practice in persistent poverty counties.

WWAMI DO Practice Locations



Number, Gender, and Age of DO Physicians by State

	Washington	Wyoming	Alaska	Montana	Idaho
Number of DO physicians	404	28	56	72	103
Percent female	23%	21%	29%	14%	14%
Mean age	50.2	49.2	49.4	48.7	48.4

WWAMI DO and MD Physicians, Selected Specialties

Discipline	% of WWAMI DO Physicians (n = 663)	% of WWAMI MD Physicians (n = 18,794)
Family medicine	50.2% (333)	20.6%
Internal medicine	5.0% (33)	11.2%
Pediatrics	2.1% (14)	6.1%
Obstetrics-gynecology	3.3% (23)	5.5%
Surgery	1.7% (11)	3.7%

More information may be obtained from Frederick Chen, MD, MPH, fchen@u.washington.edu. Funding for this study was provided by the University of Washington School of Medicine.

