

Becoming a Doctor at The University of Iowa

Medicine has remained one of the world's most sought-after professions. When people get sick, doctors figure out why. The best not only examine their patients, but they listen to them, and do tests to determine what is wrong. A good physician is someone who enjoys challenges, who likes working with others, has a natural curiosity about science and the human body, likes solving problems and is committed to learning throughout his or her life.

For people who choose to become doctors, medicine offers a vast number of career choices. You may treat patients in a clinic or hospital; conduct research in a laboratory; develop new medical technologies or devices; work in government to help shape public health laws and policies; or educate and train future generations of physicians in a variety of specialties and settings.

Whatever path you choose, as a doctor you will be able to make a difference throughout your career.

What does it take to become a doctor?

Becoming a doctor requires a serious commitment—four years of undergraduate school at a college or university, four years of medical school, and three to seven years of specialty training during what is called a medical residency.

Who goes to medical school?

Medical students come from a wide range of backgrounds. Some study sciences like biology or chemistry in college, while others major in liberal arts or humanities. At the University of Iowa Roy J. and Lucille A. Carver College of Medicine, about one-third of the medical school class majored in something other than science.

At Carver, about 70 percent of the students are residents of Iowa, and 30 percent are non-residents. Like other medical schools, Carver seeks to recruit students who reflect the diverse communities they will serve.

Admission to any medical school is competitive. Carver medical students have records of high academic achievement, including good scores on the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT), the national examination that all medical school applicants must take. In addition, medical schools look for applicants

who have first-hand experiences in health care through volunteering, research, and shadowing physicians. An important part of the admissions process is a campus visit for a personal interview.

What are Course Requirements?

Applicants must earn college credit in the following courses: General Biology, Advanced Biology, Chemistry, Organic Chemistry, Biochemistry, Physics, Math, English Composition or Literature, and Social/Behavioral Sciences and Humanities. These courses are in addition to courses required for their major.

What happens in medical school?

At Carver, medical students learn both the science and the practice of medicine. They study subjects such as biochemistry, anatomy, foundations of cellular life, genetics, how science and society impact health; and skills like problem solving, teamwork, and communication. The medical curriculum emphasizes professionalism, collaboration, and lifelong learning.

First-year medical students at Carver participate in the White Coat Ceremony, an event where each student is "cloaked" with a white lab coat to mark the beginning of his or her medical education. By donning white coats at the start of medical school, students accept their responsibility to care for their patients. They recite the Oath of Hippocrates for the first time after they are given their white coats.

The first 18 months of medical school stress both factual knowledge and key skills such as critical thinking, establishing rapport with patients and colleagues, and conducting medical histories and physical examinations. This is followed by two and half years of clinical clerkships, where students apply what they have learned in the classroom to supervised experience with real patients. During this time, students experience a range of medical specialties, which helps them choose the specialty in which they want to receive training after graduation and ultimately practice.

Students apply and interview at residency programs at hospitals, and in March of their fourth year, they learn where they will be spending the next few years in a medical residency. The National Residency Matching Program pairs the top choices of students with available spots in residency programs across the

country. The pairings are simultaneously announced at schools across the country every March on "Match Day," an occasion that students look to with anticipation. It will reveal where they will spend the next several years of their professional education.

How is residency different from medical school?

After graduation from medical school, doctors continue with additional training in their chosen specialty. The difference is that these are paid positions usually at hospitals where they get a great deal of experience. Specialty training ranges from three years for family medicine, emergency medicine, and pediatrics to five to seven years for different types of surgery.

What is the difference between an intern and a resident?

The first year of post-graduate medical education is sometimes called internship, although that term is no longer used as widely as in the past. An *intern*, or a first-year resident, is a recent medical school graduate just starting specialty training. *Junior residents* have advanced to their second or greater year of residency. A *senior resident* usually comes in the third, fourth, or fifth year, depending on the specialty. The *chief resident* has completed his or her residency program and is charged with overseeing daily operations.

Additionally, a physician may pursue more specialized training through a fellowship. For instance, a doctor who wants to specialize in cancer care and treatment may complete an internal medicine residency followed by an oncology fellowship. These physicians are referred to as *fellows*.

What happens after residency training?

Once their residency is completed, physicians obtain certification in their chosen specialties. They are required to demonstrate that they have completed training and pass a written or oral examination. Physicians who complete this process become diplomates of their specialty boards. Medical licensure is a separate process governed by boards in each state. Iowa offers several types of medical licenses, including one for residents in postgraduate training programs. After completing a defined portion of their training, doctors may apply for a permanent license to practice.

What do you mean by "lifelong learners"?

Medical students at Carver are expected to become lifelong learners who continue their education throughout their careers. One way to do this is to participate in continuing education programs, such as those offered by the University of Iowa's Continuing Medical Education program. In Iowa, physicians licensed to practice in Iowa must complete 40 hours of certified courses every two years in order to renew their licenses.

Health Sciences Campus

The Medical Education and Research Facility is home base to Carver's students. Learning communities provide space for science and clinical skills education, as well as social and service activities. The students complete many of their clinical rotations at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics; Iowa City Veterans Administration Hospital and our branch campus which features several major hospitals in Des Moines, Iowa. These facilities are integral to the University of Iowa Health Care mission, "Changing Medicine, Changing Lives."

MORE INFORMATION:

Carver College of Medicine activities for high school students: <https://uihc.org/stem>

Carver College of Medicine Doctor of Medicine Program: <http://www.medicine.uiowa.edu/md/admissions/>

Association of American Medical Colleges "How Do I... Decide if a Career in Medicine is Right for Me?": <https://students-residents.aamc.org/choosing-medical-career/medical-careers/deciding-if-medicine-you/>

Association of American Medical College "Aspiring Docs": <https://www.aamc.org/students/aspiring>

Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT): <https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/mcat/>

