

CAREER SERVICES *at Whitworth*

Making the Decision to Study Medicine

Am I the right kind of person for a medical career?

Ask yourself some questions:

- Do I care deeply about other people, their problems, and their pain?
- Do I enjoy helping people with my skills and knowledge?
- Do I enjoy learning, gaining new understanding? Do I often dig deeper into a subject than my teacher requires? Do I understand the value of learning beyond just making good grades?
- Am I interested in how the human body functions? Am I intrigued by the ways medicine can be used to improve life?

If you answered "Yes" to most of these questions, chances are you have the right kind of personality for a medical career.

What is medical school really like? I hear it's long and tough. How long? How tough?

One of the important truths is "things that come easily usually aren't worth much." Medical school is challenging. If you want to take responsibility for people's health and well-being, you've got to be serious about learning. Once you've been accepted, the medical school faculty and staff will do everything they can to help you succeed. In fact, more than 96 percent of entering medical students obtain their M.D. degrees.

The curriculum at many medical schools has changed in recent years. However, here's a general, quick look at what you can expect during four years of medical school.

During the first two years you will study the basic sciences—anatomy, biochemistry, physiology, microbiology, pathology, and pharmacology—as well as behavioral sciences. You'll also begin learning the fundamental techniques of taking a medical history and examining patients.

Next, you'll go into the hospital and various clinics to observe and work with experienced doctors and begin to learn how to take care of patients. At this time you'll begin to explore the wide variety of career paths within medicine, such as family practice, internal medicine, surgery, psychiatry, obstetrics and gynecology, and pediatrics.

Your final years are spent continuing your contact with patients and doctors in a clinical setting while taking elective courses.

After medical school you will spend three to seven years in a residency, where you will gain further experience and training in the specialty you have chosen. You already may have an idea of which specialties interest you; however, it's good to keep an open mind until your third year of medical school.

Medical school usually lasts four years. In general, during the first two years, you study the sciences basic to medicine: anatomy, biochemistry, physiology, microbiology, pathology, and pharmacology, as well as behavioral sciences; introductory patient interviewing and examination techniques; and an introduction to health care. In the third year, you gain experience with patients in hospital, clinic, and office settings in the fields of internal medicine, family medicine, pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, surgery, and psychiatry. The fourth year is a mix of required and elective courses where

you gain additional experience caring for patients. Each medical school differs in how it organizes its educational program. The [Medical School Admission Requirements \(MSAR™\)](#) has specific details. Medical school is tough. A lot will be demanded of you both in the volume of information you will be expected to master and the rate at which you will be expected to learn. You will need good study habits and time management skills as well as a strong academic background. You also will need to be aware of and tap into the tremendous support, guidance, and mentorship that medical school faculty and staff provide to help you succeed. Medical schools are committed to their students and their education. In general, more than 96 percent of all students enrolled succeed in earning their M.D. degree.

Toward the end of medical school you will choose a specialty; after graduation you will spend at least three years in a graduate medical education (residency) program. During that period you must obtain a license to practice.

How long does it take to get a medical education?

Most would say a lifetime. Doctors are always learning as new discoveries are made and new technologies develop. However, it usually takes four years after college to obtain the M.D. degree. After that, you will choose a medical specialty and spend three years or more as a resident physician in a teaching hospital, where you train for certification in a specialty and will be paid, usually about \$30,000 a year, to care for patients.

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