

## Know Your Doctor

### *MD, DO, PA, NP or CNM - What is the difference?*

When you visit the medical center, you may notice the many different types of medical providers available at Baldwin Area Medical Center. You may have wondered what the difference is between a Medical Doctor (MD), a Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (DO), a Physician Assistant (PA), Nurse Practitioner (NP) or Certified Nurse Midwife (CNM). What do these titles stand for, what is their education, and what makes them different from one another?

#### *Medical Doctor (MD)*

**Education and training:** Bachelor's degree in Science studies followed by four years of Medical School. Formal education is followed by a residency from three to seven years depending on the specialty area of practice (example: a family practice doctor may have a residency of three years, while an orthopedic surgeon may have a residency / fellowship of 7 years).

**Scope of Practice:** A Medical Doctor examines patients, prescribes medications, orders and interprets diagnostic tests, performs surgical procedures and diagnoses people for injuries, disease and other medical conditions. An MD may also provide prenatal care and deliver babies. An MD's specific area of practice is determined by his or her training and interests.

#### *Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (DO)*

**Education and training:** Bachelor's degree in Science studies followed by four years of Medical School. Formal education is followed by a residency from three to seven years depending on the specialty area of practice.

**Scope of Practice:** A Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine examines patients, prescribes medications, orders and interprets diagnostic tests, performs surgical procedures and diagnoses people for injuries, disease and other medical conditions. A DO may also provide prenatal care and deliver babies. A DO's specific area of practice is determined by his or her training and interests.

### *What is the difference between an MD and a DO?*

The education and training of a medical doctor (MD) versus a doctor of osteopathic medicine (DO) is very similar. The one difference is that a DO's education places a strong emphasis on the musculoskeletal system in order to better understand how an injury or illness in one part of the body can affect other parts.

#### *Physician Assistant (PA-C)*

**Education and training:** Bachelor's degree followed by an additional two years of training in an accredited Physician Assistant Program.

**Scope of Practice:** A Physician Assistant examines patients, prescribes medications, orders and interprets diagnostic tests, and diagnoses people for injuries, disease and other medical conditions. A PA works under the supervision of a medical doctor. A PA's practice may vary depending on the practice of the physician(s) he or she is working with and his or her interests.

#### *Nurse Practitioner (NP)*

**Education:** Bachelor's degree in Nursing followed by a Master's degree or Doctorate in Nursing.

**Scope of Practice:** A Nurse Practitioner examines patients, prescribes medications, orders and interprets diagnostic tests, and diagnoses people for injuries, disease and other medical conditions. An NP may provide prenatal care. An NP works in collaboration with a physician or medical group. An NP's specific area of practice is determined by his or her training and interests.

#### *Certified Nurse Midwife (CNM)*

**Education:** Bachelor's degree in Nursing followed by a Master's degree or Doctorate in Midwifery Science.

**Scope of Practice:** A Nurse Midwife provides preventative women's health care, prenatal care, and labor and delivery care. They care for both women who want a natural birth and those that choose to have pain medications. They also provide care after the baby is born and help with breastfeeding. A CNM works in collaboration with an OB/GYN physician when necessary.