

# Age old medical practice offers a new alternative

By Bob Waite  
Emerald Contributor

Naturopathic medicine is not a form of new age healing. It is an age old medical practice that combines modern medical techniques with older natural remedies, including good health and diet habits, said Dr. Gary Dreger, Oregon State licensed Eugene naturopathic doctor.

The Naturopathic Health Care Center at 1185 Arthur St., looks like many other medical clinics: a one-story building nestled on manicured grounds divided into a reception area, business office and patient examination rooms. The office houses two of Eugene's five naturopaths, Dreger and Dr. Debra Martin-Belleville.

Dreger said he was drawn to naturopathy because he witnessed two accidental deaths on operating tables as a former hospital employee.

The trauma of this experience, he said, led him to the naturopath college in Portland in search of gentler medical methods.

According to a clinic pamphlet, the naturopath seeks less intrusive methods of health practice, like less reliance on knives and needles, to heal humanity's various ills.

The naturopath's substitute for sharp metal objects is "natural medicine" that stimulates the body's healing processes.

Dreger said many people see NDs because they have been to medical doctors without good results or because their prescribed drugs have side effects. NDs prescribe natural medicines that are more gentle, Dreger said.

Conventional medicine has rejected

natural medicines, he said, because plant medicines cannot be patented.

"There are limits to our medicine," Dreger said. "We don't do major surgeries. When a patient calls in the middle of the night with a rupturing appendix we rush them to (a hospital emergency room)."

Naturopathic medicine has a long history. According to a November 1986 article in *Medical Self-Care* magazine, naturopathy was founded by Dr. Benedict Lust, a 19th century physician.

Lust believed "the human body possesses an inherent ability to heal itself through the mechanism of homeostasis, restoring the balance in structure and function and adapting to environmental changes."

According to *Medical Self-Care*, Dr. John Kellogg, brother of cereal company founder W. K. Kellogg, adherent of Lust's "nature cure" method and member of the 7th Day Adventist church, developed Kellogg's Corn Flakes as the naturopath's breakfast food of choice.

Francine Delmore, who teaches weight control classes at a Eugene Seventh Day Adventist church, agreed that Kellogg was influenced by the church's interest in natural cures.

Kellogg expanded his interest, as a trained physician, to help form naturopathy as a new branch of medicine that, similar to the Adventist's methods, seeks to cure by teaching good health habits.

Some NDs, however, added other older methods of healing such as acupuncture, acupressure and Chinese herbal medicine, Dreger said that, while Asian



Photo by Sean Poston

The tools of the trade for a naturopath are not that different from those of conventional healers.

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