

An introduction to Naturopathy

by Steven Bailey

This is my first *Just Health* column in this paper. As a regular columnist I will focus on a broad range of health issues with an emphasis on topics and concerns of the reading public at *Just Out*. As a Naturopathic doctor I will emphasize preventive aspects of health as well as disease reversal and wellness. I will

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also track political and local medical issues as they arise.

While Oregon has more licensed Naturopathic doctors than any other state, Naturopathy is a practice that most Oregonians know very little about. For this reason I will devote most of this article to explaining the practice and philosophy of Naturopathic Medicine.

Naturopathic Medicine is a branch of medicine that is based on the philosophy "vis medicatrix naturae," which translates to "let the force of nature be your medicine." The Naturopathic doctor (N.D.) will utilize substances found in nature (foods, herbal products, heat, electricity, hydrotherapy, massage, fasting, etc.) to encourage the body's natural ability to heal itself. Like other healing arts, Naturopathy continually grows with the advancements of science, integrating new knowledge with proven therapies that have withstood the tests of time.

One of the areas that distinguishes Naturopathic Medicine from other areas of the heal-

ing arts is the concept of "wellness." "Wellness" or "health" may be defined as a freedom from "dis-ease," a freedom to live, grow, and create without undue attention to limiting symptoms in the physical, emotional and mental areas of life.

While much of the high-tech medicine of today concerns itself solely with the removal of symptoms, the naturopathic approach is quite different. To the N.D., symptoms represent the body's vital expression of "dis-ease." The Naturopathic physicians seek to identify and eliminate the factors that cause the symptoms, and by doing so, a healthier state will return, and the symptoms themselves will disappear. Therefore, rather than treating the symptoms alone, the Naturopathic physician will attempt to understand the "whole" person, to remove illness through its root causes, with a state of wellness and prevention of future "Dis-ease" as the final objective.

Many people are familiar with the term holistic medicine. The term holistic was coined in the late 1960s, yet the concept of treating the whole person has been the foundation of Naturopathic medicine since its inception. The triad of body, mind and spirit has been an inseparable unit in the naturopathic approach in treating health concerns. Within this triad, the holistic approach considers such areas as personal lifestyle, attitudes, heredity, mental and emotional characteristics as well as physical symptoms and state-of-the-art diagnostic and laboratory work-ups. The end result is more personalized health plans directed to your own personal needs and individual problems.

In Oregon we are guaranteed that any practicing naturopathic physician has met a rigid standard of academic requirements as well as having passed national exams in the clinical sciences. The Oregon Board of Naturopathic Examiners is appointed by the Governor, and serves as the regulating authority for the profession. Continuing education is re-

quired on a yearly basis to keep practicing physicians abreast in current advancements in the areas of science, diagnosis, therapeutics and other areas of specific Naturopathic concern.

While some Naturopathic doctors specialize in particular areas of care (i.e. home births, homeopathy, Chinese medicine, etc.) most practitioners are oriented toward general practice. Some of the common services performed by Naturopaths include:

Nutritional Counseling: Specific individual diets including vitamins, minerals and other nutritional supplements to strengthen the body. Nutritional therapeutics are included in all clinical courses in Naturopathic colleges as well as extensive courses on nutrition itself. I know of no other doctoral level curriculums that offer as extensive an education in nutrition as do the two State accepted Naturopathic colleges.



ILLUSTRATION: E. ANN HINDS

Botanical (herbal) Medicine: The federal government has recognized the Naturopathic profession as the current base of herbal medicine. Naturopathic physicians in Oregon are licensed to use any substances that are found in nature. These products are used both nutritionally and medically as the case may warrant.

Homeopathy: A required part of the Naturopathic curriculum, with specialization available to interested students. This is a form of medicine which uses minute amounts of plant or other natural substances to stimulate the body's innate healing ability.

Manipulation: Corrections of stress or trauma-induced misalignments of muscle, connective tissue and the skeletal system. Naturopathic doctors are accepted for insurance work in all on-the-job injuries and auto accidents in Oregon.

Physical Medicine: The therapeutic use of water, light, electricity, ultrasound, massage and exercise.

Chinese Medicine: Like homeopathy, all Naturopathic students are required to take courses in acupressure and Chinese herbology with the ability to specialize in these areas. The Oregon College of Oriental Medicine which offers the degree of A.C. utilizes a partial shared curriculum program with the National College of Naturopathic Medicine in Portland. Naturopathic doctors who have specialized in Chinese medicine can complete their A.C. program with one additional year of study and then take state boards to practice Acupuncture in Oregon.



Natural Childbirth: Prenatal and postnatal care and natural childbirth in an out-of-hospital setting. Practicing home-birth physicians must complete additional continuing education to keep abreast in all areas of obstetric care. Where natural childbirth is not medically indicated, patients are referred for appropriate care.

Minor surgery: The repair of superficial wounds, removal of superficial foreign bodies, cysts and other superficial masses with local anaesthesia as needed.

Psychological Techniques: Counseling, hypnotherapy, emotional support and bio-feedback are commonly integrated into the in-patient services.

Naturopathic medicine is not the answer to all problems nor is it a form of medicine that benefits all individuals. It is a form of medicine that is primarily drug-free and requires active participation on the part of the patient. Health is a dynamic entity, and the promotion of a sound base may take work and patience, but I feel the end results are well worth the effort.

I personally have a family practice approach to my work although I emphasize programs in fasting, immune support, stress, musculoskeletal injuries and women's health care. You can find Naturopathic doctors and clinics listed under "Naturopathic" in the Portland yellow pages or under "physicians, Naturopathic" in most other Oregon yellow pages. It is never too early to begin building the base of a healthy future.

Readers of *Just Out* are probably as concerned with freedom of choice as any group around. To this end, the Oregon Health Care Coalition has formed to eliminate discrimination in health insurance policies in Oregon. A bill has been drafted that will allow the consumer the right to choose who provides their health services and will prohibit insurance companies from having the right to refuse payment on covered service performed by any licensed provider. Oregon is one of fewer than a dozen states that still allow insurance discrimination and it is time for a change. More on the progress of this legislation in future articles. If you have personal interest in this area you can write the coalition at P.O. Box 10943, Portland, Oregon 97210.

If you have any areas of concern that you would like comment on in *Just Health*, please write me at *Just Out*, c/o Steven Bailey, N.D., P.O. Box 15117, Portland 97215.

IF YOUR DOCTOR ISN'T HELPING YOU, MAYBE YOU NEED ANOTHER KIND OF DOCTOR

If you are suffering from chronic health problems such as allergy, headache, constipation, arthritis, fatigue, or lower back pain, a naturopathic doctor may be able to help where others have failed. Naturopaths are trained in laboratory and clinical diagnosis, botanical medicine, homeopathy, nutrition, spinal manipulation, massage, counseling, and other natural therapies that enhance your body's own healing powers (they also *feel* good.) These therapies often will help when conventional medical methods do not. They can also be used as preventive medicine to enhance your immune system or keep more serious illnesses from developing.

The PORTLAND NATUROPATHIC CLINIC, located at the National College of Naturopathic Medicine, is known throughout the country as the foremost teaching clinic in natural healing methods, and specializes in the treatment of chronic or acute illnesses without surgery or synthetic drugs.



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A SECOND OPINION!

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