

# Natural Path: My Practice

By Dr. Carol McIntyre

I hope you have been enjoying this AMAZING weather we have been having! There is a big harvest this year. I have been trying to balance my preservation techniques with spending time outside. Rain will come soon and I want to soak up the sun!

There are some reminders I would like to share in regards to my practice. These are mostly just informative. I would like to try and answer some common questions people have and give basic information to people who have not yet visited the office.

**What I do:** I am a Naturopathic physician and a licensed Acupuncturist with a Doctorate in Naturopathic medicine, a Masters in Oriental medicine and a Bachelors in psychology with minor in sociology. I am recognized as a PCP (primary care physician) in the state of Oregon and have applied with Columbia County CCO to be recognized as such. If the paperwork is approved that will mean that you can choose to be assigned to me and I will act as your PCP. I practice spinal manipulation, nutrition, Chinese and Western herbs, Essential oils, homeopathy, acupuncture, well-child check-ups, physical exams, DOT physicals, body work and musculoskeletal techniques including use of TENS and US application. I also have a DEA license to prescribe prescription drugs.

**Insurance:** I bill insurance. I take BCBS, Kaiser, Moda/ODS, OHP/Medicaid/Columbia County

CCO, Cigna, United Health, UMR, Health Net, Lifewise, Providence, MVA (motor vehicle accidents) and workman's compensation claims. I am sure there is some I am leaving out. ALWAYS call your insurance company to verify benefits, as each insurance is different. This last point is extremely important. Please follow up. I do not bill Medicare or Veteran benefits including Tri-care. These are part of a federal program and as a Naturopathic doctor I am not recognized to bill federally derived insurance.

**Scheduling:** Office hours are T/TH from 9am-4pm with the last appointment taken at the latest 3:30pm and Wed from 3pm-8pm. Currently, I am still taking new patients but that will soon have to be capped. I allow time for 3 new patients per week. Because of my increased patient basis I see that I will soon need to reduce this in order to allow time for follow up patients.

**Rates:** I have cash paying discounts for patients paying at time of service. Insurance billing rates will be provided upon request. I do allow payments. Individual patients may only carry an outstanding balance of \$200. Families may only carry a total balance of \$350. I feel this is more than generous as I have a large outstanding student loan debt to pay off as well.

**Family:** My family is a priority for me and I try to balance my practice/patients and family accordingly. There are many times when you will see my children at the office and even my dog. Having the flexibility to share my office space with my children is very important to me and should also be viewed as part of

my practice.

**Other community involvement:** I am the master and treasurer of our local Vernonia Community Grange #305. I have served as treasurer for a number of years and as Master since January 2014. I also coach soccer and volunteer at the school. My office hours are dictated specifically to allow for other time in my life for different activities. Please understand that I do my best to accommodate all patients as needed. If there comes a time when I cannot get you in I will either schedule you at a later date or refer you to another physician for treatment accordingly. We do live in a small town and I may be associated with you on many different levels. Priority is given to medical necessity, not personal connection. Thank you for understanding.

I am more than happy to have such a thriving practice in our lovely town of Vernonia. Thank you for making it possible with your great support and many referrals. I have patients that travel from over the hill, Forest Grove, Banks and even beyond the Portland area. I am humbled by this. I will continue to do my best to serve Vernonia and the surrounding community.

Please contact the office with any questions you may have and I will get back to you as soon as I can. This is a lot of information is one setting. Take the time to review everything and call with questions as you have them.

Be kind. Be respectful. Be happy and enjoy this beautiful weather! Thank you for joining me~ Be Well.

# Who Are Physician Assistants?

By: James T. Ferguson, MPH, PA-C, DFAAPA, former faculty Pacific University

Oregon is a vast state with a population just under 4 million. Approximately 1 million people live in rural communities that are most often considered to be medically underserved.

Columbia County falls into this category. It is a large rural county with just under 50,000 people living in several small towns (St. Helens, Rainier, Vernonia) and many more even smaller communities.

Access to medical care is a chal-

lenge for many in the county and Vernonia is no exception. Vernonia has a population of just over 2,000 people but the Vernonia Health Center is available to serve the people of Vernonia as well as the population residing in the immediate outlying areas surrounding the town which totals upwards of 10,000 people.

With only about 10% of physicians choosing to practice medicine in rural areas of the U.S., rural communities depend on well trained, certified, licensed medical providers to serve the primary care and first responder needs of their communities. Physician Assistants (PA) are one such medical provid-

er.

PAs are qualified medical professionals who are trained at nationally accredited schools and programs, many affiliated with medical schools. PAs are trained using a similar model of medical education that medical schools have used successfully to train physicians.

PAs have previous medical training prior to entering PA school. Many have had previous careers as EMTs, paramedics, nurses, nurse practitioners, physicians from foreign countries, naturopaths, medical assistants, radiology technicians, respiratory technicians, and more.

PAs are trained as generalists—they receive a broad didactic education over 13 months covering all areas of general medicine and then participate for 15 months in clinical rotations seeing patients under the guidance of PA and MD preceptors to solidify their didactic education. Many PAs elect to go on to do residencies in primary care, emergency medicine or some other discipline. PAs take a comprehensive national certification examination in medicine every 10 years like their family physician colleagues to maintain their compe-

tency. PAs are partners with physicians in providing high quality medical care to those in need in rural communities. They are health care professionals well respected in the general medical community.

Vernonia has a history of utilizing the physician-PA team to provide quality medical care to its citizens and this model of care has been proven to be successful in thousands of communities throughout the U.S. for close to 50 years now. Vernonia is blessed with a new health center and a dedicated health board that has its "finger on the pulse" of the health care needs of the broader community.

The health board has formed a partnership with Pacific University to explore ways that a variety of medical services can be made available to the people of Vernonia and the outlying area among which are the primary care services of a PA in partnership with a qualified physician.

As this and other partnerships are solidified they will serve the people of Vernonia and the surrounding region well into the future making much needed health care services accessible.


## Health Program Targets Uninsured Women Over 40 in Vernonia

The Public Health Foundation of Columbia County's Nurse Practitioner, Kathy Kuskie, is going to be at the Vernonia Health Center on November 6 to see women who need their annual exams, breast exams, etc. For uninsured women over 40 there is a program to cover not only their exam but also a mammogram. The program is the Breast and Cervical Cancer Program, which qualifies on family size and income. Please call the clinic for more info or to make an appointment. 503-429-0622

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