

## Overview of the Naturopathic Profession

According to the *2015 World Naturopathic Report, a summary of the 1<sup>st</sup> global naturopathic survey* and the *2016 Naturopathic Roots* report, the following outlines the naturopathic profession globally. A detailed review of these concepts can be found in the *White Papers on Naturopathic Philosophy, Principles and Theories* on the WNF website.

### Foundation Basis of Naturopathic Profession

The foundational basis of the naturopathic profession includes two philosophies, seven principles and key theories.

**Naturopathic philosophies:** The philosophies of “vitalism” and “holism” are core to Naturopathic practice globally.

**Naturopathic principles:** There is global consensus on the naturopathic principles. Slight variations were identified as relating to jurisdictional restrictions, more so than philosophical differences. The guiding principles of naturopathic practice include:

- The Healing Power of Nature (*vis medicatrix naturae*)
- Treat the Whole Person (*tolle totum*)
- Treat the Cause (*tolle causam*)
- First, Do No Harm (*primum non nocere*)
- Naturopathic Doctor as Teacher (*docere*)
- Health Promotion and Disease Prevention
- Wellness

**Naturopathic theories:** Concepts and theories common to naturopathic practice include:

- Humoral Theory
- Emunctory Theory
- Therapeutic Order

### Naturopathic Practice

Naturopathy / naturopathic medicine is guided by the foundational concepts above and includes:

**Designations:** Over 77% of countries use the term *naturopath* and 41% use *naturopathic doctor*. Terms, such as *Heilpraktier* or *naturista* reflect differences in languages and local regulations. Naturopathic professionals are grouped according to their level of education. The naturopathic profession includes technicians, practitioners, doctors and researchers.

**Naturopathic Assessment:** The naturopathic assessment is patient centred. The goal is to determine the factors contributing to a patient’s state of health or disease. It involves inquiry into a number of factors including lifestyle, social, environmental, external, genetic and medical interventions. The assessment tools utilized include a thorough

intake, standard or complaints based physical exam, traditional assessment techniques such as tongue and pulse diagnosis, iridology, and laboratory testing. The variations in assessment techniques correlate with regional practices and jurisdictional regulations.

**Naturopathic Diagnosis:** There are two purposes to a naturopathic diagnosis. The first is to accurately categorize the disease using conventional or traditional diagnostic methods and the second is to determine the true causes of disease. We recognize that in some jurisdictions there are restrictions on the use of the terms diagnosis and diseases.

**Naturopathic Treatment Modalities:** There is consensus on seven core naturopathic modalities used in practice including:

- ✓ Clinical nutrition
- ✓ Applied nutrition (nutraceuticals and natural health care products)
- ✓ Herbal medicine
- ✓ Lifestyle counselling
- ✓ Hydrotherapy
- ✓ Homeopathy, including complex homeopathy
- ✓ Physical modalities based on the treatment modalities taught and allowed in each jurisdiction including yoga, naturopathic manipulation, osteopathy, muscle release techniques.

A strength of naturopathy / naturopathic medicine is that it is an integrated system; as such, each jurisdiction and region can incorporate other modalities based on regional traditional health care practices and on the level of education and regulation in the jurisdiction. Other modalities integrated into naturopathic practice include energetic techniques such as acupuncture, and modalities associated with additional education such as intravenous therapies and prescribing.

### Professional Formation

**Global Access:** Naturopathy is the traditional form of medicine in Europe. In the late 1800s the practice began in North America, Asia and Western Pacific - making naturopathy a traditional system of medicine prominent in four world regions. Currently naturopathy is practised in over 90 countries and spans all world regions. There are over 100,000 practitioners practicing globally.

**Naturopathic Educational Curriculum:** Although there is variation in naturopathic educational standards, all naturopathic educational programs/institutions indicated that their curriculum includes naturopathic philosophies, principles and theories; basic sciences; clinical sciences, naturopathic disciplines and a practical component. The minimum educational standard set for naturopathic practice by the WHO is 1500 hours, yet over 25% of naturopathic educational programs are over 4,000 hours; 33%

offer programs between 3,000 and 3,999 hours; and 15% are between 2,000 and 2,999 hours.

**Naturopathic Visits:** The initial naturopathic visit is generally one to two hours in length. Follow up visits are between thirty minutes to an hour. Over 75% of practitioners work in solo or multi-disciplinary clinics. It is becoming increasingly common for naturopaths / naturopathic doctors to work in integrated clinics and in hospital settings. There is currently no country that includes naturopathy in publicly funded government health care plans. Visits to naturopathic practitioners are paid for out-of-pocket or are covered by 3<sup>rd</sup> party private insurance.

**Naturopathic Research:** Naturopathic research is conducted in a majority of the educational institutions that have a naturopathic program. There is a tremendous breadth of naturopathic research spanning many different aspects of naturopathic practice as well as disease states and conditions.

**Naturopathic Regulation:** Regulation ensures patient safety. Over 50% of countries surveyed have some form of regulation and 45% reported title protection. A third of countries reported no regulation at all. Regions such as North America have a defined scope of practice and Naturopathic Doctors are considered primary care practitioners. Improving regulations is a key focus of the WNF.

#### **Associated Policies:**

Definition of Naturopathy/ Naturopathic Medicine

Policy on Naturopathic Regulation

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