

# AANMC Core Competencies *of the Graduating Naturopathic Student*



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## Purpose

The purpose of the document is to describe the core competencies of a graduate from an accredited naturopathic doctoral program in order to align curriculum, define expectations of graduates and inform stakeholders regarding the education of physicians who practice naturopathic medicine. The expectation is that this document will serve to guide current and future programs of naturopathic medical education.

## Introduction

<sup>1</sup>Naturopathic Medicine is a distinct primary health care profession that combines the traditions of natural healing with the rigors of modern science. Naturopathic physicians are trained as primary care providers who diagnose, treat and manage patients with acute and chronic conditions, while addressing disease and dysfunction at the levels of body, mind and spirit. They concentrate on whole patient wellness through health promotion and disease prevention, attempting to find the underlying cause of the patient's condition. Naturopathic physicians care for patients of all ages and genders. They provide individualized evidence-informed therapies that balance the least harmful and most effective approaches to help facilitate the body's inherent ability to restore and maintain optimal health.

A resurgence of interest in naturopathic medicine in North America in the 1970s resulted in rapid growth and maturation of the naturopathic profession to where it is today. As of 2014 there are seven institutions of higher learning offering naturopathic degrees in eight locations across North America. The Council on Naturopathic Medical Education (CNME) is the accrediting body for these programs. Graduates of CNME accredited naturopathic medical programs receive a Naturopathic Doctoral designation (ND) and are eligible to sit for the Naturopathic Physicians Licensing Examination (NPLEX).

The Association of Accredited Naturopathic Medical Colleges (AANMC) and its Council of Chief Academic and Clinical Officers (CCACO), recognized the need for agreement among the AANMC member schools on clinical expectations for graduates of CNME accredited naturopathic medical programs. As such, CCACO and AANMC embarked on examination of current clinical expectations and the creation of a unified baseline for clinical competency of the naturopathic medical graduate. In August of 2012, CCACO agreed to embark on the creation of naturopathic clinical competencies for the accredited institutions. In July 2013, academic and clinical deans from each CNME accredited institution met together and developed a draft document, after which time CCACO convened a taskforce of representatives from the accredited naturopathic

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### <sup>1</sup> References:

*House of Delegates Position Paper, American Association of Naturopathic Physicians (Amended 2011)*

*"What is a Naturopathic Doctor", American Association of Naturopathic Physicians*

medical programs and the executive director of AANMC. This subgroup met regularly for six months, and received input from CCACO, stakeholders and advisors in the broader medical and educational communities to create the first draft of the naturopathic clinical competency document. The document then received input from the naturopathic community and final approval from CCACO and the AANMC Board of Directors. The following report constitutes consensus on clinical competencies for the naturopathic medical graduate.

## Core Principles

**The practice of naturopathic medicine is guided by six core principles, as defined by American Association of Naturopathic Physicians (AANP).**

**First Do No Harm (Primum Non Nocere):** The naturopathic physician follows three guidelines to avoid harming the patient:

- Uses methods and medicinal substances which minimize the risk of harmful side effects;
- Uses the least force necessary to diagnose and treat; avoid when possible the harmful suppression of symptoms; and
- Acknowledges, respects, and works with individuals' self-healing process.

**The Healing Power of Nature (Vis Medicatrix Naturae):** The naturopathic physician recognizes an inherent self-healing process in people that is ordered and intelligent. The naturopathic physician acts to identify and remove obstacles to healing and recovery, and to facilitate and augment this inherent self-healing process.

**Identify and Treat the Causes (Tolle Causam):** The naturopathic physician seeks to identify and remove the underlying cause(s) of illness rather than to merely eliminate or suppress symptoms.

**Doctor as Teacher (Docere):** The naturopathic physician educates patients and encourages self-responsibility for health. The physician also recognizes and employs the therapeutic potential of the doctor-patient relationship.

**Treat the Whole Person:** The naturopathic physician treats each patient by taking into account individual physical, mental, emotional, genetic, environmental, social, and other factors. Since total health also includes spiritual health, the naturopathic physician encourages individuals to pursue their personal spiritual development.

**Prevention:** The naturopathic physician emphasizes the prevention of disease by assessing risk factors, heredity and susceptibility to disease, and by making appropriate interventions in partnership with the patient to prevent illness.

### **The Seven Areas of Competence for the Naturopathic Medical Graduate:**

- Medical Assessment and Diagnosis
- Patient Management
- Communication and Collaboration
- Professionalism
- Career Development and Practice Management
- System Based Practice
- Practice Based Learning, Research and Scholarship

## Medical Assessment and Diagnosis

Naturopathic medical graduates conduct a complete and accurate history, physical exam and objective assessment, to arrive at a diagnosis. They demonstrate the knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes expected of a naturopathic physician within the context of a patient-centered model.

The naturopathic medical graduate:

Elicits a complete and accurate medical and biopsychosocial history

- Establishes a therapeutic doctor-patient relationship
- Demonstrates active listening when taking a history and performing a physical exam
- Assesses the determinants of health, as defined by the World Health Organization
- Documents the medical record consistent with legal, institutional, and ethical requirements

Performs a complete and accurate health examination, including pathological and functional assessment

- Selects assessments and performs diagnostic procedures based on a risk benefit analysis
- Performs appropriate system-specific or hypothesis driven examination based on patient presentation
- Performs health screenings for disease prevention and early diagnosis
- Orders and/or performs appropriate diagnostic tests and imaging studies
- Conducts rapid assessment in emergent situations
- Performs assessments mindful of personal biases including, but not limited to, age, sex, race, ethnicity, disability, religion, social status, gender identity, and sexual orientation

Formulates an accurate medical diagnosis

- Interprets results for laboratory tests, physical examination, imaging studies, and other diagnostic tests
- Integrates the medical history, physical examination and diagnostic testing with naturopathic principles in formulating a diagnosis
- Applies critical thinking and clinical reasoning to the synthesis of a medical diagnosis
- Identifies emergent and life-threatening situations and diagnoses
- Communicates assessment findings and diagnosis with the patient as appropriate

## Patient Management

Naturopathic medical graduates provide personalized, compassionate, ethical, holistic patient care. Determination of interventions are informed by considering the risk of harm, efficacy, level of evidence and patient values and priorities as individually appropriate in promoting patient health and prevention of disease.

The naturopathic medical graduate:

Establishes therapeutic relationships with patients

- Builds and maintains rapport in patient interactions
- Displays empathy in patient interactions
- Respects doctor/patient roles and responsibilities
- Actively collaborates with patients in shared decision making

Develops an individualized treatment plan based on diagnosis and consistent with naturopathic principles

- Incorporates cultural and psychosocial issues
- Uses best practices and best available evidence
- Focuses on safe, natural medical care
- Emphasizes health promotion and illness prevention
- Considers the safety, efficacy, contraindications, actions and interactions of therapies
- Fosters patient adherence through consideration of the patient's circumstances, resources and ability to implement the plan
- Addresses physical, spiritual, mental and emotional aspects of the patient

Recommends and/or administers therapies used in the individualized care of patients, including but not limited to \*:

- Botanical medicine
- Counseling (e.g., lifestyle counseling, health psychology, mind-body medicine)
- Homeopathic medicine
- Medical office therapeutic procedures (e.g. injections and infusions, minor surgery)
- Clinical Nutrition (e.g., dietary counseling and nutraceuticals)
- Pharmaceuticals
- Physical medicine (e.g., manipulation, electrotherapies, and hydrotherapy)

\*Therapeutic modalities outlined in this document are those consistent with offerings at all CNME recognized institutions. Additional therapeutic modalities may be taught within individual academic programs.



Facilitates informed patient decisions by presenting evidence-informed therapeutic and wellness options including risks, benefits and alternatives to therapies

- Engages patients in establishing a long-term focus for their personal health management with an emphasis on prevention and wellness
- Provides counseling and support for patients, their families, and significant others related to chronic illness, acute illness and end of life issues
- Recommends plan for follow up care
- Reassesses treatment plans considering clinical outcomes, best practices and patient needs
- Documents plan of care and revisions to plan of care
- Recognizes personal limitations, adheres to scope of practice and makes referrals when appropriate
- Intervenes and/or refers in urgent and emergent care situations

## Communication and Collaboration

Naturopathic medical graduates communicate effectively to optimize patient relationships and patient care. They refer, consult and collaborate with other health professionals as appropriate when providing care.

The naturopathic medical graduate:

Communicates effectively with patients, and when appropriate their families and significant others

- Describes succinctly what naturopathic medicine is, and the role and responsibilities of naturopathic physicians
- Analyzes the patient narrative
- Communicates findings with patient

Educates patients regarding their diagnosis and prognosis

- Provides counsel on treatment options
- Promotes treatment plan adherence to achieve therapeutic goals

Demonstrates empathy, compassion, and objectivity in patient interactions

- Demonstrates sensitivity and respect for cultural identity including, but not limited to, age, sex, race, ethnicity, disability, religion, social status, gender identity, and sexual orientation
- Utilizes appropriate resources when experiencing barriers to communication

Consults with and/or refers to other health care professionals when care is outside of scope of practice or personal competence

- Conveys effective oral and written communication to other medical professionals
- Collaborates as a member of the patient's health care team to provide safe and effective care

Educates members of the patient's health care team regarding the role of naturopathic medicine and the naturopathic physician in patient care

- Recognizes and respects the roles and responsibilities of other professionals within the health care team.
- Collaborates as a member of the health care community to address public health issues such as access to care
- Provides leadership in the incorporation of the naturopathic physician as an integral member of the health care community
- Promotes naturopathic medicine and principles to the community at large

## Professionalism

Naturopathic medical graduates demonstrate professional behavior, personal integrity, and altruism. They are aware of their limitations in expertise, operate within the jurisdictional scope of practice, and refer care when appropriate. They exemplify the principles of naturopathic medicine personally and professionally as health care professionals and leaders in the community.

The naturopathic medical graduate:

Maintains legal and ethical standards, including but not limited to

- Patient confidentiality
- Informed consent
- Documentation of care
- Scope of practice
- Mandatory reporting
- Professional boundaries
- Conflicts of interest

Demonstrates respect and integrity in professional interactions

- Fulfills professional commitments in a timely and responsible manner
- Provides and receives constructive feedback as a part of peer and self-evaluation of professional competence
- Recognizes and addresses ethical issues arising in practice
- Demonstrates a commitment to balancing patient care, self-care, and responsibilities to colleagues, community, family and friends
- Mentors members of the profession

## Career Development and Practice Management

Naturopathic medical graduates are able to establish a viable career in naturopathic medicine.

The naturopathic medical graduate:

Creates a realistic career plan

- Applies basic principles of marketing towards the establishment and growth of a patient base
- Adheres to best practices in management standards including financial practices, negotiation, inventory and business
- Demonstrates the ability to plan and manage time and resources
- Maintains a professional network
- Promotes practice and relationships through effective public and professional communications
- Identifies and responds to practice challenges and opportunities
- Participates in continuous quality assessment and improvement
- Demonstrates key leadership attributes in practice management

## Systems Based Practice

Naturopathic medical graduates demonstrate an awareness of the developing role of naturopathic medicine within larger frameworks of health care and health care systems in order to advocate for optimal patient care.

The naturopathic medical graduate:

Demonstrates a working understanding of available health care resources, both conventional and complementary, in order to address patient and community needs

Influences community or population health through education, community initiatives and other efforts to shape public and professional health care policy

Demonstrates an ability to participate effectively within a health care team with respect to referral skills, collaboration and co-management of care

Practices cost-effective health care through evidence-informed management, preventive strategies and lifestyle management with an aim at alleviating the overall health care burden

## Practice Based Learning, Research, and Scholarship

Naturopathic medical graduates critically appraise, assimilate and apply scientific evidence to improve patient care. They demonstrate an understanding of the strengths and limitations of research. Naturopathic graduates are dedicated to ongoing personal reflection and lifelong learning.

The naturopathic medical graduate:

Applies the skills of evidence-informed practice to patient care:

- Formulates a clinical research question to guide the design of the information search, using the principles and tools of evidence-based medicine
- Conducts a literature search efficiently, accessing appropriate resources in order to answer clinical questions
- Demonstrates an understanding of statistical tools
- Critically appraises relevant data to make judgments in integrating the information into clinical practice
- Applies levels of evidence in application and selection of therapeutics and patient management
- Critically evaluates patient care outcomes with respect to qualitative and quantitative measurements
- Advances the practice of naturopathic medicine through contributions to the development and dissemination of new knowledge

Demonstrates reflective practice in a commitment to lifelong learning

- Recognizes limitations in his/her own knowledge, skills, and attitudes
- Assesses professional competence using self-awareness, feedback from others and reflection on practice
- Demonstrates commitment to maintaining and improving knowledge, skills, and attitudes

## AANMC Naturopathic Clinical Competencies: Immunization Education

The purpose of this competency is to describe immunization education competence of a graduate from an accredited naturopathic doctoral program in order to align curricula, define expectations of graduates and inform stakeholders regarding the education of physicians who practice naturopathic medicine. The expectation is that this competency will serve to guide current and future programs of naturopathic medical education.

Naturopathic medical education and practice is guided by six core principles.

### Immunization Education

Naturopathic medical graduates demonstrate comprehensive clinical knowledge regarding immunization and vaccine preventable diseases.

*The following competencies are to be demonstrated with the expectation of the application of informed consent and evidence-based practice.*

The naturopathic medical graduate:

- Demonstrates knowledge of etiology, pathophysiology and epidemiology of vaccine preventable diseases
- Demonstrates knowledge of mechanism of action of vaccines
- Demonstrates knowledge of the risk involved to self and others of being under-vaccinated or unvaccinated
- Demonstrates knowledge of the immunization schedule within the parameters of regulatory jurisdictions
- Demonstrates knowledge of indications and contraindications of vaccines
- Demonstrates ability to manage side effects and adverse reactions to vaccines
- Demonstrates knowledge of jurisdictional reporting requirements regarding adverse reactions
- Demonstrates the ability to educate the vaccine-hesitant individual
- Demonstrates knowledge of vaccine administration and maintenance requirements

**\*\*\* Use of the term physician may vary based on jurisdictional legislation**