

Defining the Global Naturopathic Profession

According to the *2015 World Naturopathic Report, a summary of the 1st global naturopathic survey* and the *2016 Naturopathic Roots* report, the following describes 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”ⁱ and “holism”ⁱⁱ are core to Naturopathic practice globally.

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

- 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 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 / physician*.ⁱⁱⁱ Terms, such as *Heilpraktiker* or *Naturópata* reflect differences in languages and regional regulations. Naturopathic professionals are grouped according to their level of education. The naturopathic profession includes technicians, practitioners, doctors and researchers.

Assessment: The naturopathic assessment is patient centred with goal of determining the factors contributing to a patient’s state of health. It involves investigation into various 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 within traditional medicine and laboratory testing. The variations in assessment techniques correlate with regional practices and jurisdictional regulations.

Diagnosis: There are two primary and interrelated purposes to a naturopathic diagnosis. The first is to accurately categorize the disease using conventional techniques and/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

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

- ✓ Clinical nutrition and diet modification/counselling
- ✓ Applied nutrition (use of dietary supplements, traditional medicines 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, muscle release techniques.

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

Professional Formation

Global Access: Naturopathy is a core form of 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 about 100,000 naturopathic practitioners globally.^{iv}

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 World Health Organization (WHO) is 1500 hours.^v According to the 2016 WNF Naturopathic Roots Report, 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.^{vi}

Practitioner 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 third-party private insurance.

Research: 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.

Regulation: The focus of regulation is patient safety. Over 50% of countries surveyed have some form of regulation and 45% reported title protection.^{vii} A third of countries reported no regulation at all. Regions such as North America have a defined scope of practice by provincial or state governments with Naturopathic Doctors are considered primary care practitioners. Improving regulations globally is a key focus of the WNF.

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References:

ⁱ *Vitalism* describes the intelligence that animates each and every person and it refers to forces beyond the physical self that govern life, health and healing.

ⁱⁱ *Holism* means all, entire or total. It is based on the realization that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts

ⁱⁱⁱ *World Federation Report, results from the 1st survey of the global naturopathic profession.*
<http://worldnaturopathicfederation.org/wnf-publications/>

^{iv} *Naturopathic Numbers Report.* 2016 WNF. <http://worldnaturopathicfederation.org/wnf-publications/>

^v *Benchmarks for Training in Naturopathy.* 2010. WHO.
<http://apps.who.int/medicinedocs/documents/s17553en/s17553en.pdf>

^{vi} *Naturopathic Roots Report.* 2016. WNF. <http://worldnaturopathicfederation.org/wnf-publications/>

^{vii} *World Naturopathic Federation Report, findings from the 1st global naturopathic survey.*
<http://worldnaturopathicfederation.org/wnf-publications/>