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# WNF – Terminology Document

Defining Naturopathic Terms

[www.worldnaturopathicfederation.org](http://www.worldnaturopathicfederation.org)



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## Acknowledgements

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<http://worldnaturopathicfederation.org/wnf-publications/>.

The groundwork for the WNF Terminology Document is a 100-page document, the *White Paper on Naturopathic Philosophies, Principles and Theories*<sup>1</sup>, that was published in 2017.

This initiative was led by the WNF Naturopathic Roots Committee, subcommittee Terminology and included Heilpraktiker, naturopaths and naturopathic doctors (ND) as WNF members further outlined in the Appendix:

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## Introduction

All world regions and all naturopathic educational institutions teach and practice according to a core set of naturopathic philosophies, principles and theories, utilising a common set of naturopathic modalities. As confirmed by the 2015 and 2016 WNF surveys, there is a high degree of global consistency in the core concepts that define naturopathy.

The aim of the WNF Terminology Project is to facilitate inter-professional collaboration (IPC) by clarifying terms used in naturopathic practice that are also commonly used in healthcare systems, but may have different meanings.

It is important to highlight that based on jurisdictional regulations, or lack of regulations, the ability to use certain terms is restricted.

## Methodology

The first step for the terminology committee members was to choose naturopathic terms that are commonly used in naturopathic practice, especially where the naturopathic definition might be different from conventional medicine or other health care systems. The terms chosen define important aspects of naturopathic philosophies, principles and theories and naturopathic assessment, diagnosis and treatment.

The committee created and approved a standard template where each term's definition includes: the term, the definition, and the specific relation of the term to naturopathic philosophies, principles, and theories.

## Process

In 2017, the WNF created the *White Paper on Naturopathic Philosophies, Principles and Theories*<sup>1</sup>, which incorporated both original and more modern naturopathic theories and concepts. This document provides a detailed description on the naturopathic philosophies, principles and theories that compose the foundation of naturopathic practice.

The naturopathic concepts defined in the *White Paper*<sup>1</sup> document include the historical origin, contributors, a more detailed description and an extensive reference list. The *White Paper*<sup>1</sup> serves as background information and primary reference for the *WNF Terminology Document*.

In 2017 the World Naturopathic Federation, in response to an identified need outlined by the World Health Organization (WHO), undertook the WNF Naturopathic Terminology Project as a subcommittee of the Naturopathic Roots Committee. The members of the committee span 6 world regions: Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, North America and the Western Pacific.

Ensuring that all WNF projects and committees include representation from multiple world regions is also an important criterion of the WHO, in order to recognize the documents engaged by the WNF.

The draft document was circulated in May 2019 to all WNF members and sponsors for feedback. At the March 2019 WNF General Assembly, the WNF Terminology Project was discussed and endorsed by the WNF membership. The final document was **approved in August 21<sup>st</sup>, 2019 by the WNF Executive board.**

## 1. Constitution

### **Definition:**

Constitution is the aggregate composition and energetics of an individual person's spiritual, psychological, functional, and structural characteristics and includes the way in which such characteristics are composed and how they are interrelated. It is impacted by some factors, including an individual's genetics, the accumulation of an individual's life-experiences, and their environment.

The constitution of a person is a concept intrinsic to the naturopathic principles of *the Healing Power of Nature*, *Treat the Cause (tolle causam)* and *Treat the Whole Person (tolle totum)*, as well as the naturopathic theories *Integration of the Individual* and *Humoral Theory*.

## 2. Doctor as Teacher

### **Definition:**

The naturopathic principle Doctor as Teacher (*docere*) emphasises the importance of education, personal responsibility, and development of an individual's knowledge and understanding of their health and health care conditions, as well as the safe and effective use of behavioural, lifestyle and natural medicines to improve health and well-being.

The principle *Doctor as Teacher (docere)* is linked with the other naturopathic principles *Treat the Cause (tolle causam)*, *Treat the Whole Person (tolle totum)* and *Health Promotion*.

## 3. Emunctorology

### **Definition:**

Emunctorology describes the processes and organs of detoxification and elimination in the body. The emunctor theory states that proper elimination of toxins assists homeostasis and optimal health. Supporting the emunctor pathways helps the Vital Force of the person to function under more optimal conditions through discharge of toxic substances. The primary emunctor pathways include lymph, liver, kidneys, skin, respiratory, bowel, bladder and genital organs. Secondary emunctor pathways include all other ways that the body excretes toxins, for example nasal and eye discharge.

Emunctorology is related to the naturopathic philosophies of *Vitalism* and *Holism*, the principles *Healing Power of Nature (vis medicatrix naturae)*, *Treat*

*the Cause (tolle causam) and Treat the Whole Person (tolle totum), the naturopathic theory of Therapeutic Order, the theory of Toxaemia and the Humoral Theory.*

#### 4. First, Do No Harm

**Definition:**

To do no harm, a naturopath / naturopathic doctor establishes the most gentle and non-invasive treatment strategy and advice to achieve the desired outcome for each individual patient.

*First, do no harm (primum non nocere) is a naturopathic principle that is respected in all aspects of naturopathic clinical practice especially the Therapeutic Order.*

#### 5. Healing Power of Nature

**Definition:**

The term *Healing Power of Nature (vis medicatrix naturae)* denotes that all living organisms have an inherent self-organizing, ordered healing ability along with the innate ability to grow, develop, reproduce and progress through defined stages of life.

The *Healing Power of Nature (vis medicatrix naturae)* is a central naturopathic principle and it is related to the naturopathic philosophy *Vitalism*.

#### 6. Health Promotion

**Definition:**

Naturopathic practice recognizes that health and disease are logical, complex and multi-factorial. The goal of naturopathic care is not only to reduce and treat disease, but to optimize an individual's health and well-being. The naturopathic perspective of Health Promotion is broad and recognizes the importance of a number of determinants, including lifestyle, social relationships, environment, external, medical interventions, genetic and gestational factors as well as a person's personal essence.

*Health Promotion is a naturopathic principle that is associated with the principles of the Healing Power of Nature (vis medicatrix naturae), Treat the Cause (tolle causam), Treat the Whole Person (tolle totum), Doctor as Teacher (docere), Disease Prevention and the naturopathic theory of Constitution and Emunctory Theory.*

## 7. Holism

### **Definition:**

The holistic approach of naturopathic practice recognizes that the spiritual, psychological, functional and structural aspects of an individual act interdependently and are influenced by external, environmental, social and other factors. To thereby treat an individual, one treats the whole person that is the intrapersonal and interpersonal dynamics and their interaction with their environment and society.

*Holism* is a core philosophy in the naturopathic approach to clinical assessment, diagnosis and treatment and directly relates to the naturopathic principle *Treat the Whole Person (tolle totum)* and the naturopathic theory of *Integration of the Individual*.

## 8. Homeostasis

### **Definition:**

Homeostasis is an inherent self-healing mechanism by which biological systems maintain optimal function and resiliency while adapting to all internal and external factors.

*Homeostasis* is related to the naturopathic philosophy of *Vitalism*, the principle of the *Healing Power of Nature (vis medicatrix naturae)* and to the naturopathic *Emunctory Theory*.

## 9. Naturopathic Clinical Assessment

### **Definition:**

The naturopathic clinical assessment is a patient-centred process with the goal of determining the factors that contribute to an individual patient's state of health and/or disease as well as their vitality in order to determine how their symptoms, condition and disease-state are presenting on the multidimensional levels of the individual and their social interactions. A naturopathic clinical assessment may include standard conventional assessment techniques and specialized naturopathic assessment practices.

A naturopathic clinical assessment is primarily guided by the naturopathic principles *Treat the Cause (tolle causam)* and *Treat the Whole Person (tolle totum)* and the naturopathic theory of *Constitution* and *Vital Force*.

## 10. Naturopathic Diagnosis

### **Definition:**

A naturopathic diagnosis is the summation and interpretation of the findings from the naturopathic clinical assessment. There are three primary and interrelated purposes to a naturopathic diagnosis. The first is to accurately categorize the symptoms, condition and/or disease-state using conventional medical terminology and/or traditional naturopathic diagnostic concepts, the second is to determine the underlying causes of the patient's symptoms, conditions or disease-state and the third is to determine the patient's vitality and healing ability.

The concept of a naturopathic diagnosis primarily follows the naturopathic principles *Healing Power of Nature (vis medicatrix naturae)*, *Treat the Cause (tolle causam)* and *Treat the Whole Person (tolle totum)*.

## 11. Naturopathic Treatment

### **Definition:**

Naturopathic treatment is an integrative clinical practice tailored to each individual patient. It is focused on self-responsibility such as dietary and lifestyle changes and may include the application of modalities such as clinical nutrition, applied nutrition, herbal medicine, lifestyle counselling, hydrotherapy, homeopathy, and physical modalities such as acupuncture and exercise therapy. The use of invasive treatments including intravenous therapy and mesotherapy depend on educational standards and jurisdictional regulations.

The naturopathic principles *First, Do No Harm (primum non nocere)*, *Treat the Cause (tolle causam)*, *Treat the Whole Person (tolle totum)*, *Doctor as Teacher (docere)*, *Disease Prevention and Health Promotion* and the naturopathic theory *Therapeutic Order* guide naturopathic treatment.

## 12. Prevention

### **Definition:**

Prevention includes reducing the contributing factors to symptoms, conditions and diseases and their progression as well as supporting the natural healing ability of the body. Naturopathic clinical practice emphasizes the importance of addressing all factors that impact health and educating patients on how to live a life that supports their constitution and unique susceptibilities throughout all phases of life, ensuring optimal wellness and the prevention of disease.

*Prevention* is a naturopathic principle that relates to *Healing Power of Nature (vis medicatrix naturae)*, *Doctor as Teacher (docere)* and *Health Promotion* and the naturopathic theory of *Constitution*.

## 14. Therapeutic Order

### **Definition:**

The Therapeutic Order is a hierarchical philosophy for therapeutic intervention. It guides naturopathic practice and its application by respecting the natural healing process and vitality of an individual. The basis of the naturopathic therapeutic order is that the body possesses an intrinsic nature to heal itself using the least possible force.

Therapeutic Order guides naturopathic practice. It is also associated with the naturopathic principles of *First, do no Harm (primum non nocere)*, *Healing Power of Nature (vis medicatrix naturae)*, *Treat the Cause (tolle causam)* and *Treat the Whole Person (tolle totum)*.

## 15. Treat the Cause

### **Definition:**

Treat the Cause, is the process of choosing a treatment regimen that addresses contributing factors for each symptom, condition or disease. Naturopathic practice recognizes that health and disease are logical, complex and multi-factorial. The cause of most symptoms, conditions or diseases can be traced back to lifestyle, social, environmental, external, genetic or other factors as well as the status of vitality.

*Treat the Cause (tolle causam)* is a central tenet of naturopathic principle and is included in the naturopathic assessment, diagnosis and treatment.

It is related to the philosophy *Holism*, the naturopathic principle *Healing Power of Nature (vis medicatrix naturae)*, *Health Promotion* and the naturopathic theory *Integration of the Individual* and *Constitution*.

## 16. Treat the Whole Person

### **Definition:**

Treat the Whole Person is a concept that recognizes the spiritual, psychological, functional and structural aspects and vitality of an individual as being part of an inseparable whole. Individuals are also interconnected and interdependent with family, community and environment. This concept is essential to patient-centred

naturopathic practice and is included in the naturopathic assessment, diagnosis and treatment.

*Treat the Whole Person (tolle totum)* is a naturopathic principle that relates to the naturopathic philosophy *Holism*, the principle *Treat the Cause (tolle causam)*, the naturopathic theory *Integration of the Individual*, the theory of *Constitution* and the *Humoral Theory*.

## 17. Vital Force

### **Definition:**

An individual's vitality is a measure of the vital force that they possess at any specific stage of life or disease. Vitalism describes an individual's inherent capacity to live, grow, develop and heal.

*Vital force* is interrelated with the naturopathic philosophy *Vitalism* and associated with the naturopathic principles *Healing Power of Nature (vis medicatrix naturae)* and *Health Promotion* and the theory of *Constitution*.

## 18. Wellness / Wellbeing

### **Definition:**

Wellness and Wellbeing are interrelated concepts about an individual's state of health. Wellness reflects more of the objective aspect; whereas Wellbeing reflects an individual's subjective perception of their state of Wellness. It is the spiritual, psychological, functional and structural aspects and vitality of an individual's health that creates an individual's sense of overall Wellness and Wellbeing.

Wellness / Wellbeing is one of the naturopathic principles and is integrated into all other naturopathic principles.

## Reference

1. WNF White Paper: Naturopathic Philosophies, Principles and Theories, September 2017. WNF Web site. [http://worldnaturopathicfederation.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/White-Paper\\_FINAL.pdf](http://worldnaturopathicfederation.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/White-Paper_FINAL.pdf)

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