

WHITE PAPER

Role of Naturopathic practice within a global pandemic

This White Paper is for policymakers and healthcare practitioners to inform them of the research and the role that naturopathic practices can have on the management of COVID-19.

Managing the current global pandemic requires utilizing all available treatments and resources both within conventional medicine and within the field of Traditional and Complementary Medicine (T&CM). Naturopathic medicine / naturopathy is an established T&CM system of medicine that is practiced in 98 countries around the world. (1) This current pandemic highlights the need to focus on lifestyle factors and to address noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), both of which are strengths of naturopathic practice.

Recognizing that there are limited treatment options and no cure for COVID-19 and building on contemporary research evidence, the global naturopathic profession undertook the task of analyzing the current research and conducting rapid reviews to assess the role of specific naturopathic recommendations which may be useful in the management of COVID-19.

The World Naturopathic Federation (WNF) represents naturopathic organizations around the world with the aim of promoting, supporting and enhancing the global naturopathic profession.

Key Messages

1. Addressing lifestyle factors and NCDs is an important step in decreasing the risk and severity of the current pandemic.
2. Most individuals choose to include complementary healthcare products and practices as part of their personal and family healthcare regimen.
3. The WNF has produced research-based rapid reviews focusing on human studies of natural products in treating acute respiratory tract infections. The results of these studies are an important consideration for COVID-19.
4. Naturopathic practice is knowledge-based and evidence-informed.

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Traditional and complementary medicine (T&CM) is an important and often underestimated health resource with many applications, especially in the prevention and management of lifestyle-related chronic diseases, and in meeting the health needs of the ageing populations.

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus,

Director-General, World Health Organization

Foreword from WHO Global Report on

Traditional and Complementary Medicine 2019

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Key Messages

KEY MESSAGE 1

Addressing lifestyle factors and NCDs is an important step in decreasing the risk and severity of the current pandemic.

- A strength of the naturopathic profession is that it addresses lifestyle factors as an integral part of practice. Naturopathic practitioners support informed decision making and address diet, exercise, breathing and other aspects of healthy living as part of their general treatment strategy for all health conditions.(2, 3)
- Non-communicable diseases (NCDs), in particular diabetes, hypertension and cardiovascular disease, respiratory diseases and mental and neurological health conditions are common conditions treated by naturopathic practitioners.(3)
- An International Study of Health Promotion and Community Education Activities of Naturopathic Clinicians demonstrates that the naturopathic profession is actively engaged in community education and the promotion of a healthy lifestyle.(4)
- There are over 100 naturopathic-based community clinics around the world providing naturopathic care to the underprivileged, vulnerable and to specialized groups such as Indigenous and those with AIDs.(5)
- According to a recent survey, those with chronic diseases indicated that they were the most satisfied with the service they received from naturopathic practitioners. (6)



To support individuals in making informed decisions the WNF has created an animated video for the public about building a shield of wellness to protect you from life's challenges. This video is available in five languages.(7)

KEY MESSAGE 2

Most individuals choose to include complementary healthcare products and practices as part of their personal and family healthcare regimen.

- According to the WHO, 88% of countries report the use of T&CM products and / or practices and Naturopathy is practiced in 98 countries.(1)
- There is a growing trend for individuals to choose herbal remedies, vitamins and minerals as part of their healthcare regimen, especially when treating minor and chronic health concerns.(8)

KEY MESSAGE 3

The WNF has produced research-based rapid reviews focusing on human studies of natural products in treating acute respiratory tract infections. The results of these studies are an important consideration for COVID-19. (9)

- **Vitamin C:** When taken at onset of acute respiratory viral infections (ARI), oral vitamin C may reduce the duration of symptoms including fever, chest pain, chills and bodily aches and pains. It may also reduce the incidence of hospital admission and duration of hospital stays. (10)
- **Vitamin D:** Experimental evidence indicates that deficiency and insufficiency of vitamin D is associated with increased risk of ARI, and supplementation for those with deficiency/insufficiency may lead to clinically meaningful reductions in the incidence of ARI. (11)
- **Zinc:** Zinc may reduce the risk of SARS-CoV-2 infections and shorten the duration and severity of illness. Indirect evidence from systematic reviews have found zinc supplementation is effective for the prevention of acute respiratory infections in young children and zinc lozenges may reduce the duration in adults. (12)
- **N-Acetyl-Cysteine:** Current evidence suggests that N-Acetyl Cysteine (NAC) may improve outcomes in people with acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS) and acute lung injury (ALI) – conditions that closely resemble the signs and symptoms of COVID-19. NAC may assist in improving markers of inflammation or oxidation, systemic oxygenation, the need for and duration of ventilation, rate of patient recovery and overall clinical improvement score. (13)
- **Essential Oils:** Clinical evidence from published clinical trials suggests that oral administration of blends of certain essential oils (EO) can reduce symptoms of acute viral respiratory infections. (14)
- ***Sambucus nigra L. (Elderberry):*** Collectively the evidence obtained from across five clinical studies involving 996 adults indicate that *Sambucus nigra L.* berry (S.nigra), when taken within 48 hours of onset of acute respiratory viral infection, may reduce the duration and severity of common cold and influenza symptoms in adults. (15)
- ***Echinacea spp. (Echinacea):*** Echinacea supplementation may assist with the symptoms of acute respiratory infections and the common cold, particularly when administered at the first sign of infection. (16)
- ***Hedera helix (Ivy Leaf):*** *Hedera helix* preparations may be a therapeutic option for treating early symptoms of respiratory tract infections. The best effectiveness for *H. helix* preparations has been proven for coughing, as an expectorant and to reduce the frequency and intensity of cough. (17)
- **Important and common interventions such as *Glycyrrhiza glabra* will continue to be explored as new research becomes available.**



KEY MESSAGE 4

Naturopathic practice is knowledge-based and evidence-informed.

- Naturopathy is defined by its philosophies, principles and theories and includes treatment modalities such as lifestyle counselling, nutritional support, clinical nutrition, herbal medicine, physical medicine, hydrotherapy and other therapies.(2)
- Research in whole-system, multi-modality naturopathic medicine shows that it is effective in the management of conditions such as cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, depression, anxiety, and a range of complex chronic conditions.(18)
- The international naturopathic research community has produced peer-reviewed literature for over 30 years and has demonstrated sustained commitment to codifying existing knowledge, generating new knowledge, and disseminating this knowledge to the wider clinical and research community. (19)
- Overview of international naturopathic practice and patient characteristics: results from a cross-sectional study in 14 countries revealed that Naturopathic practitioners provide health care for diverse health conditions in patients in different age groups.(3)
- The quality of research assessing clinically relevant disease-oriented and patient-centered outcomes of whole practice naturopathic medicine is positive. Naturopathic medicine is a system of medicine with positive public health implications for a wide variety of chronic health conditions.(20)

Next Steps

Naturopathic doctors / naturopaths are an integral part of the global healthcare team.

- The WNF will continue to expand their work with governments, policymakers and healthcare providers in supporting health promotion and in tackling the challenges associated with lifestyle diseases and the ageing population.
- The WNF will continue to support research and to facilitate clinical trials aimed at clarifying the role of natural products in the management of COVID-19 and other global health concerns.
- For more information: worldnaturopathicfederation.org



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