



# **Naturopathic Key Messages**

# Key Stats on the Global Naturopathic Profession

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- The naturopathic profession has existed as a distinct health care system for over 120 years.
- Naturopathic Workforce in 108 countries
- Over 110,000 naturopaths/ naturopathic doctors (NDs) globally
- 34 countries with statutory regulation for the naturopathic workforce
- Over 130 naturopathic educational programs internationally
- 5.5 million naturopathic patient visits per month globally
- Over 100 naturopathic community clinics
- More than 20 naturopathic research centres
- Naturopaths/NDs have published over 2000 peer-reviewed articles since 1987 with notable increases in the last 20 years.
- An average of 4 different naturopathic therapeutic modalities or practices are used in every naturopathic visit.
- 98% of naturopaths/NDs engage in community education and health promotion activities.

# Defining Naturopathic Profession

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## *What is the Origin of the Naturopathic Profession?*

Naturopathy originated in Germany in the late 1800s as a European traditional system of medicine. It is part of Traditional and Complementary Medicine (T&CM) throughout all WHO Regions.

## *What is Naturopathy / Naturopathic Medicine?*

Naturopathy/naturopathic medicine is a traditional system of medicine defined by core philosophies and principles, guided by distinct naturopathic theories and integrated with a biomedical understanding of health and disease. Naturopathy/naturopathic medicine is a primary health care system that embraces complexity in all levels of patient assessment, diagnosis, treatment, and management that uses natural therapies to support and stimulate the body's innate ability to heal itself.

## *How is Naturopathy Defined?*

Naturopathy is defined by two philosophies and seven principles. The naturopathic philosophies of *vitalism* (an innate intelligence of living organisms) and *holism* (the body is a complex adaptive system that exists as a unified whole) are core to naturopathic practice.

# Defining Naturopathic Profession

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### *What are the Naturopathic Principles?*

There are seven naturopathic principles that guide every aspect of naturopathic care:

- I. First, Do No Harm (*primum non nocere*)
- II. Healing Power of Nature (*vis medicatrix naturae*)
- III. Treat the Cause (*tolle causam*)
- IV. Treat the Whole Person (*tolle totum*)
- V. Doctor as Teacher (*docere*)
- VI. Health Promotion and Disease Prevention
- VII. Wellness and Wellbeing

### *What are the Theories that Guide Naturopathic Practice?*

Naturopathic theories guide naturopathic practice and provide an understanding of the clinical reasoning and decision making used in naturopathic care and include:

- *Naturopathic Therapeutic Order* provides a graduated guide to applying naturopathic practices, therapies, and services.
- *Emunctory Theory* outlines the need to and process of eliminating toxins to achieve health.
- *Theory of Complex Systems* acknowledges the human body as a complex adaptive system and provides a framework for understanding the interconnectedness of human health.

# Defining Naturopathic Profession

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## *What is the size of the Naturopathic Workforce?*

The naturopathic workforce of more than 110,000 practitioners spans over 108 countries throughout all WHO Regions.

## *How many patients are treated per month globally?*

It is estimated that the naturopathic workforce provides care to over 5.5 million patients globally per month.

## *What is the Focus of Naturopathy / Naturopathic Medicine?*

The focus of naturopathy/naturopathic medicine is in disease prevention and establishing optimal health. It is based on the knowledge that the body has an innate ability to heal itself when the obstacles to cure are removed and the building blocks to health are provided. Naturopathy/naturopathic medicine recognizes the importance of addressing the psychological, functional (biochemical), structural, spiritual and environmental aspects of a person in order to identify and treat the roots causes of disease.

# Naturopathic Care

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## *How would you Describe Naturopathic Care?*

The naturopathic workforce is known for its diverse and flexible therapeutic approach as it employs a range of therapeutic modalities in their individualized and multi-modal integrative approach to patient care.

The use of a complex intervention approach to care allows naturopaths/NDs to utilize the synergistic properties of various treatments and to treat the psychological, functional, and structural aspects of each patient. The naturopathic community are leaders in examining the impact of integrating multiple T&CM treatment approaches in conventional care settings.

## *Who do Naturopaths / Naturopathic Doctor's Treat?*

The naturopathic workforce practice as primary health care providers and work collaboratively with other healthcare professionals. They treat patients across the lifespan with naturopathic care primarily focusing on prevention and chronic conditions, but also includes patients with acute conditions and those in palliative care. The naturopathic workforce is an untapped health resource for governments to address high burden health conditions in the community.

Or – The naturopathic workforce treats patients across the lifespan with naturopathic care largely focusing on disease prevention and non-communicable diseases.

# Naturopathic Care

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### *What is a Naturopathic Assessment?*

Naturopathic assessment is a person-centered process that focuses on assessing a patient's health status, on identifying factors contributing to patient's symptoms and/or diseases and on assessing a patient's vitality and well-being. The breadth of the naturopathic assessment varies by jurisdiction and regulatory status, and may include a comprehensive patient history, physical exam, naturopathic exam and/or diagnostic techniques, and the review of medications and appropriate laboratory tests.

### *What is a Naturopathic Diagnosis?*

Naturopathic diagnoses draw upon biomedical and profession-specific diagnostic methods to evaluate a patient's health status, determine underlying causes, and assess a patient's vitality and sense of well-being.

### *How does the Naturopathic Workforce Practice?*

Naturopathic practice is complex and multi-modal and incorporates core naturopathic therapies, modalities and practices including applied nutrition, clinical nutrition, herbal medicine, lifestyle modification, mind-body medicine counselling, naturopathic physical medicine, hydrotherapy, and other therapies based on jurisdictional regulations and naturopathic education. It is common for naturopaths / NDs to perform or prescribe four or more different naturopathic therapeutic modalities or practices during a naturopathic visit.

# Naturopathic Care

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## *Is Naturopathic Care Cost-Effective?*

Naturopathic care is cost-effective, particularly for longer-term and chronic conditions and for individuals with a higher disease burden.

## *What Risks Are Associated With Naturopathic Care?*

While naturopathy is practiced widely in many countries and is a relatively low risk profession, it is not risk free. The risks associated with naturopathic care are consistent with other healthcare professions with a similar scope of practice and are related primarily to the inherent risks of the naturopathic modalities and treatments used.

When performed by a professional qualified naturopathic practitioner naturopathic care is safe. Patient safety is highly dependent on the educational standards and regulatory requirements within jurisdictions. The direct risks associated with naturopathic care are infrequent compared to most health care, usually minor in nature and of types not dissimilar to those found with other health professions with similar primary care roles. Analysis of media reports concerning the risks of naturopathic care suggests reports have often been critical without objective analysis or an examination of the merits of the situation being reported. Unlicensed practitioners appear to have a higher risk profile than regulated naturopaths / naturopathic doctors. Also, co-option of the term “naturopath” has occurred in jurisdictions without occupational licensing which exposes the public to increased risks.

To address the risks, occupational licensing or statutory registration is the WNF’s preferred model for regulation of the profession.

# Regulation and Education of the Naturopathic Workforce

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## *What is the Regulation of the Naturopathic Workforce?*

In 2022, 34 countries have occupational licensing or statutory registration for their naturopathic workforce. An additional 21 countries have voluntary certification operated by one or more naturopathy professional associations.

Without enforceable minimum qualification and probity standards for entry to the naturopathy profession, other forms of occupational regulation such as voluntary certification, co-regulation and negative licensing do not provide sufficient public protection.

## *What is the Status of Naturopathic Education Globally?*

There are two main types of naturopathic educational programs emerging globally – the doctorate-level training programs at over 4,000 hours – which currently represents 52% of all programs – and the practitioner-level training programs at 2,500 hours. There are 131 naturopathic educational programs globally with 38% residing in the region of South-East Asia, 27% in the European region, 22% in the region of the Americas, 9% in the Western Pacific region and 4% in the African region.

The doctorate-level programs are primarily in North America, Asia (India) and Western Pacific. There is diversity in naturopathic educational programs in some WHO Regions, especially Europe and Latin America, however the trend globally is to towards higher naturopathic educational programs.

# Regulation and Education of the Naturopathic Workforce

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## *What Does Naturopathic Educational Knowledge Include?*

Naturopathic educational knowledge includes:

- naturopathic history, philosophies, principles, and theories.
- naturopathic medical knowledge, including basic sciences, clinical sciences, laboratory and diagnostic testing, naturopathic assessment, and naturopathic diagnosis.
- naturopathic therapeutic modalities, practices, and treatments.
- supervised clinical practice.
- ethics and business practices; and
- research.

# Naturopathic Research

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## *What Considerations are Important when Conducting Naturopathic Research?*

It is important that naturopathy is recognized as a total system of traditional medicine and that the research paradigm employed to evaluate the effectiveness of naturopathy/naturopathic medicine is able to accommodate the complex and holistic nature of naturopathic practice in order to provide accurate results that meaningfully inform policy and practice. Pragmatic clinical research methods apply a complex, person-centred approach to clinical trial design that may help determine reliability to naturopathic practice.

## *To What Degree has the Naturopathic Profession Engaged in Research?*

The international naturopathic research community has demonstrated sustained commitment to codifying and synthesizing existing knowledge, generating new knowledge, and disseminating this knowledge to the wider clinical and research community. Naturopaths/NDs published over 2000 peer-reviewed articles between 1987 and 2018. The naturopathic profession has been increasingly engaged with evidence-based medicine since it was articulated in 1996.

# Naturopathic Research

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## *What Kind of Research do Naturopathic Researchers Conduct?*

Naturopathic researchers have investigated a broad range of health conditions and a diverse array of naturopathic treatments. Naturopathic researchers utilize all types of research designs including randomized control trials, observational studies, reviews and case studies. Naturopathic researchers publish in high ranked journals on a range of subject.

## *What is Required to Advance Naturopathic Research?*

The naturopathic profession requires adequate infrastructure to further support research, build research capacity and, consumer and practitioner engagement, and integration into health systems. There are current research designs, such as pragmatic studies, that can accurately assess the effectiveness and efficacy of naturopathic practice. Dedicated government funding for naturopathic research is needed to facilitate the naturopathic profession's interest, capability and capacity to conduct health quality research.

# Other Information

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## *Tell Me About Naturopathic Community Clinics*

Naturopathic Community Clinics (NCCs) serve underprivileged, marginalized, low income, and underserved populations along with other specialized groups at low or no cost to patients. Most NCCs are affiliated with naturopathic educational programs and increase accessibility to naturopathic primary care for diverse populations.

There are over 100 naturopathic community clinics (NCCs) around the globe with the majority existing in North America and more recently in African, Asian, European, and Western Pacific Regions.

## *What Roles Does the Naturopathic Workforce Have with Respect to Community Education?*

Health promotion activities play an important role in addressing non-communicable diseases. 98% of naturopaths/NDs engage in community education and health promotion activities and are well suited to play a more formal role in public health initiatives aimed at increasing health literacy. Most naturopathic community education activities are free to the public.

# Other Information

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## *To What Degree Does the Naturopathic Workforce Practice Knowledge Mobilization?*

Naturopaths/NDs use and share knowledge and information from diverse sources, including scientific journals, clinical textbooks, conferences, and patients.

- 76.2% of naturopaths/NDs report using information published in scientific journals to inform patient care.
- 70.1% of naturopaths/NDs report using information from laboratory, and pathology tests or radiological examinations to inform patient care.
- Naturopaths/NDs also use patient-provided information, particularly the patient's lived experience of their health condition, to inform their clinical decisions.
- Naturopaths/NDs demonstrate application of both evidence-based medicine and patient-centred care principles when they use and apply knowledge and information.



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