

# WHITE PAPER: NATUROPATHIC WORKFORCE AND HYPERTENSION

**This White Paper is for policymakers and healthcare practitioners to inform them of the essential role that the naturopathic workforce can have on the management and treatment of hypertension.**

Hypertension is a significant public health issue which is both preventable and one of the primary risk factors for cardiovascular disease. Globally, cardiovascular disease is the number one leading cause of death with low- and middle-income countries suffering the most. Due to the high global burden of cardiovascular disease, the World Health Organization (WHO) targets include a 25% relative reduction in the prevalence of raised blood pressure by 2025 [1].

The risk of hypertension is strongly associated with modifiable risk factors – lifestyle behaviours, physical activity, sedentariness, obesity, alcohol consumption, dietary choices and environmental exposures – all which are addressed as part of naturopathic care; a workforce currently underutilized [2].

**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. The naturopathic workforce works with patients in the prevention, management and treatment of hypertension, as a primary care provider and cooperatively with other health care providers.
2. The naturopathic workforce are experts in lifestyle management, addressing risk factors associated with hypertension.
3. There is a substantial body of research including systematic reviews, observational and clinical studies reporting on the use of naturopathic care for hypertension.
4. Most consumers include Traditional and Complementary Medicine (T&CM) therapies, products and practices as part of their personal and family healthcare regimen.

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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.*

Foreword from WHO Global Report on Traditional and Complementary Medicine 2019 [3]

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## **The naturopathic workforce works with patients in the prevention, management and treatment of hypertension, as a primary care provider and cooperatively with other health care providers.**

A recent international cross-sectional study in 14 countries of naturopathic practice and patient characteristics detail the naturopathic workforce as an unrecognised healthcare opportunity [4]. The individualized and multi-modal naturopathic approach serves as a model of holistic preventive cardiovascular care, management and/or treatment of cardiovascular conditions, including hypertension [2].

- Cardiovascular conditions are listed in the top 10 reasons patients seek naturopathic care [2].

- Adjunct naturopathic care exhibits reductions in cardiovascular risk and in total societal and employer costs [5].
- Patients with chronic diseases, including hypertension, who were visiting different practitioner groups indicated that they were the most satisfied with the services they received from naturopathic practitioners [6].

## **The naturopathic workforce are experts in lifestyle management and addressing risk factors associated with hypertension.**

- The naturopathic lens is well suited to complex conditions with its focus on complexity, addressing multiple causative factors and physiological systems concurrently [2].
- 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, activity level, breathing, stress management, alcohol and smoking behaviours, environmental

pollutant exposure and other known risk factors as part of their detailed assessment and general treatment strategy for all NCDs, including hypertension [2].

- 98% of the naturopathic workforce engage in community education and health promotion activities, hence they are well-suited to play a more formal role in public health initiatives aimed at increasing health literacy and healthy choices [7].

## There is a substantial body of research including systematic reviews, observational and clinical studies reporting on the use of naturopathic care for hypertension.

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 [2].

- Systematic scoping review of whole-system, multi-modality naturopathic medicine identified several studies assessing the effectiveness of naturopathic interventions for cardiovascular diseases, including hypertension [15].
- Observational study [retrospective] reveals an increased proportion of participants with normalised systolic and diastolic blood pressure following adjunctive naturopathic care over 6 months [8].
- Cohort study [prospective] participants with mild to moderate hypertension, with naturopathy-based lifestyle inter-

vention and yoga for 3 weeks, produced a decrease in mean systolic and diastolic blood pressure [9].

- Parallel randomized controlled trial investigating naturopathic intervention involving manual acupuncture compared to yogic breathing resulted in a significant reduction in systolic blood pressure [yogic breathing] and reduction in diastolic blood pressure [acupuncture] [10].
- Cohort study [prospective] over 3 months, 99% of hypertensive patients in a yoga and integrated naturopathy hospital achieved target blood pressure [11].
- A single-arm open uncontrolled trial prescribing a hypertension dietary supplement of one tablet per day revealed a decrease in systolic and diastolic blood pressure by study completion at 6 months [12].

## Most consumers include Traditional and Complementary Medicine (T&CM) therapies, products and practices as part of their personal and family healthcare regimen.

According to the WHO, 88% of countries report the use of Traditional and Complementary Medicine (T&CM) therapies, products and practices, including naturopathy [1].

- Naturopathic care is known for its diverse and flexible therapeutic approach to healthcare. It is individualized to each patient using a range of therapeutic modalities and practices, ensuring the valued client-centric elements of trust, engagement and empowerment [13].
- There is a growing trend for individuals to choose herbal remedies, vitamins and minerals as part of their healthcare regimen, especially when treating chronic concerns [14].
- It is common for the naturopathic workforce to perform or prescribe four or more different naturopathic therapeutic modalities or practices during a naturopathic visit with the most common being applied and clinical nutrition, lifestyle modifications, and herbal medicine [4, 13].

# Overview of Naturopathy

According to the Health Technology Assessment on Naturopathy: [2]

- Naturopathy is a traditional system of medicine originating in Europe that is now part of T&CM around the world as naturopathy or naturopathic medicine.
- Naturopathy is defined by two philosophies and seven principles and naturopathic care is guided by distinct naturopathic therapies.
- As of 2021, there is a naturopathic workforce in over 108 countries, and it is estimated that the naturopathic workforce sees over 5.5 million patients globally per month.
- Naturopaths / naturopathic doctors provide healthcare for diverse chronic and acute conditions throughout all stages of life and support patients seeking preventive and palliative care. The naturopathic workforce is an untapped health resource to address high burden health conditions such as hypertension both as primary care practitioners and collaboratively with other healthcare professionals.
- Naturopathic practice is complex and multi-modal and incorporates core naturopathic therapies, modalities and practices including applied nutrition, clinical nutrition, herbal medicine, lifestyle modifications, mind-body medicine techniques, naturopathic physical medicine, hydrotherapy and other therapies based on jurisdictional regulations and level of education.

For more information contact the World Naturopathic Federation at [info@worldnaturopathicfederation.org](mailto:info@worldnaturopathicfederation.org) or visit our website at [worldnaturopathicfederation.org](http://worldnaturopathicfederation.org)



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