

VI. Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

Origin

Hygiene, Diata and modus vivendi, described by the Corpus Hippocraticum,⁽⁴⁵⁾ had the deeper sense of health restoration, conservation but also health maintenance. Purpose of these healthy lifestyles was prevention of imbalance of the forces and promotion of health.

Description

Naturopathic physicians encourage and emphasize disease prevention and health promotion as one of its principles. Health promotion has been defined as,

“... the process of enabling people to increase control over their health and its determinants, and thereby improve their health. It is a core function of public health and contributes to the work of tackling communicable and non-communicable diseases and other threats to health.”⁽⁷⁴⁾

Disease prevention and health promotion involves promoting a healthy lifestyle, assessing risk factors, determining susceptibility to disease and making appropriate therapeutic interventions. It involves assessing environmental and external factors that might be affecting health, determining the impact of social relationships and community on health, as well as genetic and heredity factors and assessing the impact of medical interventions to-date. Lifestyle factors are paramount to disease prevention and health promotion and in preventing minor illnesses from developing into more serious or chronic degenerative diseases.⁽⁴¹⁾

Health promotion and disease prevention must be foremost in the mind of the naturopath / naturopathic doctor. Their responsibility is on being ‘proactive’ in maintaining health rather than solely being ‘reactive’ to treating disease.

Diseases are treated directly, but the role of the naturopath / naturopathic doctor is to facilitate increased awareness, as well as to educate each patient on the changes required to address their symptoms and diseases in order to prevent or slow the progression of disease and to avoid unwanted side-effects to conventional treatments.⁽⁷⁵⁻⁸⁰⁾

Disease Prevention and Health Promotion is a continual process⁽⁸¹⁾:

- it starts at conception and continues throughout all of life;
- it is maintained through the homeostatic mechanisms of the body;
- it involves every aspect of a person - their lifestyle, emotional and mental health and family and community; and it takes into consideration a person's environment and how to live in harmony with nature.

Contributors to the Principle Disease Prevention and Health Promotion:

The following are early naturopaths that promoted the concept of disease prevention and health promotion and ensured that this concept earned its rightful place in naturopathic practice.

- **Adolf Just** (1859-1936) spoke about health maintenance as more important than disease treatments. Prevention was referred to as health maintenance.

One of his statements was:

“All attention is about health and not about disease”.⁽³⁰⁾

- **Henry Lindlahr** (1862-1924) was a naturopath who commented on the fact that people are beginning to realize that it is cheaper and more advantageous to prevent disease rather than to cure it.⁽⁸²⁾

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