

V. Naturopathic Principle: Doctor as Teacher (docere)

Origin

- **Thomas Edison** (1847-1931) wrote,

“The doctor of the future will give no medication, but will interest his patients in the care of the human frame, diet and in the cause and prevention of disease.”⁽⁶²⁾

- **Henry Lindlahr** (1862-1924) stated that the successful doctor of the future will have to fall in line with the procession and do more teaching than prescribing.⁽⁴²⁾

Description

Docere, or “doctor”, comes from the Latin word “to teach” and a naturopath / naturopathic doctor’s role is to educate on the factors that affect health and disease so that individuals are more informed about the impact of their choices and so that they are more capable of maintaining their own health. It is through a patient’s choices about nutrition, exercise, spiritual well-being, posture, hygiene, rest, and sleep and our peace of mind, social, occupational and environmental situations that influence health.⁽¹⁷⁾

The naturopathic encounter is a patient-centered model. The focus is on the patient, why they ended up with the symptoms and conditions that they have and their relationship to their condition; more-so than the condition itself.

Naturopaths / naturopathic doctors educate the patient and encourage self-responsibility for health. They recognize the therapeutic value inherent in the doctor-patient relationship. *Docere* involves collaboration with the patient and other health professionals.⁽²⁴⁾

Teaching takes time and hence most naturopathic visits are longer to allow sufficient time for the doctor to educate and teach the patient how to make and maintain the lifestyle choices and changes needed to assist them in achieving wellness. Many patients desire an understanding of why they are sick, what they can do to improve the situation, and what they have to change for the future. It is this awareness and understanding by the patient that determines long-term wellness, not the knowledge level of the naturopath / naturopathic doctor.

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