

## IV. Naturopathic Principle: Treat the Whole Person (*tolle totum*)

### Origin

A careful physician . . . before he attempts to administer a remedy to his patient, must investigate not only the malady of the man he wishes to cure, but also his habits when in health, and his physical constitution. **Cicero (106-43 B.C.)**<sup>(72)</sup>

### Description

Treat the whole person (*tolle totum*) is a holistic concept that recognizes that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Each individual is unique with their own specific susceptibilities and way of manifesting disharmony and disease. It is the harmonious functioning of all aspects of individuals, within themselves, with others and with their environment, which is essential to health.<sup>(8)</sup>

Disease affects the entire person, not just a specific organ or system. Health and disease are a result of a complex interaction of all aspects of a person, their life and environment. The mental and emotional, functional, structural and spiritual aspects of an individual are an inseparable whole that is interconnected and interdependent with family, community and environment<sup>(8)</sup>, as exemplified in many indigenous models of health such as the Whare Tapa Wha model from the New Zealand Maori,<sup>(73)</sup> Any pattern of disharmony in any aspect of a person resonates throughout all levels of a being.

The naturopathic approach is 'patient centred' which is reflected in the fact that naturopathic patient visits are generally about one to two hours and follow up visits are between half-an hour to one hour. The long visits allow for a greater depth of understanding of the patient's health issues, how they have affected them on all levels and the causative factors (determinants) that have led to the development of those issues. The nature of naturopathic consultations requires much thought and analysis to understand the role of such determinants and their impact upon the patient's conditions and presenting symptoms.<sup>(24)</sup>

When treating the whole person an assessment must incorporate all factors including in the naturopathic principle, Treat the Cause (*tolle causam*) including

addressing nutritional status, lifestyle factors, family history and genetic factors, mental and emotional status, spiritual beliefs, environmental influences, external factors, past injuries, accidents, medical treatments, and social, community and school or work factors. Treating the whole person involves addressing all aspects of a person both internally and externally.<sup>(8, 24)</sup>

A person's constitution is their baseline. It represents their natural tendencies, their primary makeup, their appearance, and their disposition. It represents their inherent strengths and their weaknesses. It is determined at conception, but is influenced throughout life due to learned behaviour and experiences. It is also affected by a person's lifestyle and environment. A person's constitution indicates their healing potential, their resistance to disease and their susceptibilities.

Naturopathic practice, is similar to eastern medicine, recognizes that it is the uniqueness of patients and the integration of all the parts that holds the key to achieving and maintaining health.

Susceptibility is affected by past injuries, beliefs and thoughts. If a person believes that disease and a lower level of health comes with age, a decrease in healing potential might be more a reflection of this belief than their actual health status. If a person believes that they are likely to suffer the same symptoms and diseases as their parents, it is more likely to happen. The aim of maintaining health is supporting and maintaining areas of strength, and adjusting and balancing for areas of weakness.<sup>(8)</sup>

Treat the whole person has often been referred to as the Mind-Body connection and has been written about extensively in many disciplines. From a naturopathic perspective, *Tolle totum* strongly correlates with the naturopathic philosophy of *holism*. Please see the section on naturopathic philosophies for further information.

### Additional Concepts / Models to Treat the Whole Person

In 2009, naturopathic doctor Iva Lloyd<sup>(8)</sup>, created a “cogwheel” model to describe *Treat the Whole Person (tolle totum)* – Fig 3. In this model the psychological, functional and structural aspects of a person are inter-related with the personal essence of spiritual aspect of the individual.

The outer cogwheel relates to the interaction of the individual with the causal factors of disease – personal essence, genetic & gestational, lifestyle, social, environmental, external, and medical interventions.



Fig. 3: The cogwheel model – courtesy of Dr. Iva Lloyd, ND

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