

## Naturopathic Medicine: A New Old Science

This will be the first of a series of articles on health by Dr. Capon, a local Naturopathic Physician.

"The art of healing comes from nature, not the physician. Therefore the physician must start from nature with an open mind". Paracelsus, 1493-1541

Most people are not even aware of the existence of Naturopathic Medicine, or the type of medical services Naturopathic Physicians provide. The purpose of this article will be to share with the reader some basic information on the training and philosophy of Naturopathic Doctors. The modern Doctor of Naturopathic Medicine (N.D.) is extremely well trained. To enter a Naturopathic Medical College, just like other medical schools, the applicant must have a Pre-Med degree., to include biology, general and organic chemistry, physics, etc. Entry is competitive and only the best applicants are accepted. The four year graduate program in Naturopathic medicine is rigorous and challenging.

The first two years are composed of the standard medical sciences (anatomy, physiology, biochemistry, pharmacy, etc.). The last two years are divided between clinical classes and patient care. Subjects are covered such as: pediatrics, gynecology, obstetrics, orthopedics, laboratory medicine, x-ray, just to name a few. Most importantly the doctor in training starts to see patients for a wide variety of medical problems under the supervision of Naturopathic Physicians who have years of experience to share. After graduation all N.D.s who wish to practice in Washington State sit for a required licensing exam several days long.

Naturopathic doctors are on the 'medical model' in that they take patient histories, do physical exams, order lab work and take x-rays when needed. We do share some similarities with other doctors; if you cut open your hand at work, I would suture it, or if you were hit by a car outside my office, I would provide emergency medical care until you could be transported to the hospital.

Where Naturopathic Physicians differ from the predominant, Allopathic Physician (M.D.) is in our philosophy of treating patients not diseases. Naturopathic doctors believe in treating the "cause" of a problem rather than covering up symptoms. For example, if you have a headache most doctors would prescribe aspirin or other pain killers. The Naturopathic Physician may also prescribe medication for the short term, but more importantly will ask, "Why does the patient have a headache?"- Is it low blood sugar?, Allergies?, Neck or back injury? I would identify the cause of the problem and treat it accordingly. And yes, on rare occasions I will tell a patient to take an aspirin until the cause can be treated. While I can legally prescribe many legend drugs I try not to. Most Naturopathic Physicians fill the role of family doctor to their patients, (although some do specialize).

Our clinic is the first stop for sore throats, earaches, female problems, on the job injuries, auto whiplash, degenerative diseases, etc. When a specialist is required for a service beyond what a family doctor would provide I readily refer out, and often provide co-treatment care to the patient. Amongst the therapies Naturopathic doctors use are nutritional treatments, herbal medicines, manipulation, physiotherapy, massage, hypnosis, acupuncture, natural childbirth, homeopathy, hydrotherapy, exercise and other natural treatments that emphasize healing the body rather than suppressing symptoms.

The purpose of my practice as a Naturopathic Physician is to help as many individuals as possible, regain their health as naturally as I can. I hope that those who have been helped by my practice will help educate others about becoming well naturally, and in so doing make the world a better, healthier place for ourselves and our children.

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