



AANP STATE LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS
AMA Attempting to Restrict Access to Primary Care

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Governor Sean Parnell
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The American Association of Naturopathic Physicians urges you to support **HB 282 and SB 70**, which would allow comprehensively trained medical professionals the ability to serve all Alaskans to the extent of their considerable training.

Access to quality healthcare is fundamental to the wants and needs of Americans. Patients are best served when they have a team of healthcare professionals who work together to ensure overall health and wellness. Currently there is a divisive and coordinated movement led by the American Medical Association to restrict valuable services provided by more than 3.3 million licensed healthcare professionals who are not DOs or MDs. Known as the Scope of Practice Partnership (SOPP), this campaign is designed to limit patient access to safe, high-quality and cost-effective healthcare.

What is a Naturopathic Physician? Naturopathic physicians are doctors trained to provide family healthcare and to emphasize the use of natural therapies to prevent and treat acute and chronic illnesses.

What training is required to become a Naturopathic Physician? Naturopathic physicians hold a doctorate in naturopathic medicine from a four-year, graduate-level, federally-recognized and accredited naturopathic medical school. These schools train physician-level practitioners in diagnosis and scientifically-based treatment with emphasis on natural therapies. There are currently five such schools in the United States and two in Canada.

The ND degree confers the title of Doctor of Naturopathic Medicine and provides a guarantee to the public that the doctor possesses the necessary training to practice naturopathic medicine. The doctorate degree prepares naturopathic doctors to offer qualified naturopathic medical care and to work together with other medical providers.

What therapies do Naturopathic Physicians employ for their patients? Naturopathic physicians use a variety of natural and non-invasive therapies, including clinical nutrition, herbal medicine, lifestyle counseling, homeopathy, physical medicine and hydrotherapy. Naturopathic physicians also have expertise in drug / herb / nutrient interactions. Many naturopathic physicians receive additional certification in disciplines such as midwifery, acupuncture and Oriental medicine.

Why are Naturopathic Physicians critical for so many patients in Alaska? Naturopathic physicians work in private practice or in integrated settings with other medical providers such as

conventional medical doctors and osteopathic physicians. The result is a patient-centered, comprehensive approach that provides the most appropriate treatment for an individual's needs. Naturopathic physicians educate patients about why they are unhealthy and provide them with the tools for achieving optimal health.

Naturopathic medicine affords a high degree of personalized care, a focus on disease prevention, lower costs and much lower incidences of harm or malpractice. We ask for your consideration in evaluating the outdated and inaccurate claims made by the Alaska branch of the American Medical Association. Please also consider that the large majority of MDs and DOs work effectively and cooperatively with all the mid-level healthcare professionals targeted by the AMA. It is only a few, politically motivated, physicians who insist on pulling outdated and inaccurate material to protect their "turf." If successful, the SOPP will place an enormous and unnecessary burden on the American healthcare system.

Naturopathic medicine is one of 10 professions selected for profiling by the AMA. The SOPP document, made available to legislators across the country, fails to appropriately define either the practice of naturopathic medicine or the training of naturopathic physicians. Following is the federal Department of Labor current definition of naturopathic medicine and the responsibilities of naturopathic physicians, based on their training.

DEFINITION NATUROPATHIC MEDICINE: U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR 2009

Naturopathic Medicine: Diagnose, treat, and help prevent diseases using a system of practice that is based on the natural healing capacity of individuals. May use physiological, psychological or mechanical methods. May also use natural medicines, prescription or legend drugs, foods, herbs, or other natural remedies.

Sample of reported job titles: Naturopathic Physician, Naturopathic Doctor, Physician, Doctor of Naturopathic Medicine¹

Department of Labor further defines naturopathic medical practice in 5 areas that follow:

1. Professional and Public Health Obligations

- Conduct periodic public health maintenance activities such as immunizations and screenings for diseases and disease risk factors.
- Monitor updates from public health agencies to keep abreast of health trends.
- Report patterns of patients' health conditions, such as disease status and births, to public health agencies.
- Maintain professional development through activities such as post-graduate education, continuing education, preceptorships, and residency programs.

¹ Occupational Information Network. (2009). 29-1199.04 - *Naturopathic Physicians*. Retrieved December 1, 2009, from the Occupational Information Network website: <http://online.onetcenter.org/link/details/29-1199.04#Education>

2. Patient Intake and Diagnosis

- Document patients' histories, including identifying data, chief complaints, illnesses, previous medical or family histories, or psychosocial characteristics.
- Interview patients to document symptoms and health histories.
- Conduct physical examinations and physiological function tests for diagnostic purposes.
- Diagnose health conditions based on patients' symptoms and health histories, laboratory and diagnostic radiology test results, or other physiological measurements, such as electrocardiograms and electroencephalographs.
- Order diagnostic imaging procedures such as radiographs (x-rays), ultrasounds, mammograms, and bone densitometry tests, or refer patients to other health professionals for these procedures.

3. Patient Education/Advocacy

- Educate patients about health care management.
- Advise patients about therapeutic exercise and nutritional medicine regimens.
- Administer, dispense, or prescribe natural medicines such as food or botanical extracts, herbs, dietary supplements, vitamins, nutraceuticals, and amino acids.

4. Naturopathic Medical Practice

- Administer treatments or therapies, such as homeopathy, hydrotherapy, Oriental or Ayurvedic medicine, electrotherapy and diathermy, using physical agents including air, heat, cold, water, sound, or ultraviolet light to catalyze the body to heal itself.
- Naturopathic physicians consistently consult with other health professionals to provide optimal patient care, referring patients to traditional health care professionals as necessary.
- Obtain medical records from previous physicians or other health care providers for the purpose of patient evaluation.
- Perform minor surgical procedures, such as removing warts, moles, or cysts, sampling tissues for skin cancer or lipomas, and applying or removing sutures.
- Prescribe synthetic drugs under the supervision of medical doctors or within the allowances of regulatory bodies.

5. Naturopathic Prescribing Practice

It is well known that overuse of pharmaceuticals has led to thousands of preventable deaths as well as antibiotic resistance. While naturopathic doctors preferentially choose natural therapies to treat disease, they are also trained to utilize pharmaceutical drugs when in the best interest of the patient. This practice is reflected in the Survey data from the Department of Labor.

"While no naturopathic physicians reported prescribing on an hourly basis, 32% prescribe on a daily or weekly basis, and 54% prescribe more than once a month."

According to the Institute for Medicine (IOM) an estimated 15 million adults take herbal remedies or high-dose vitamins along with prescription drugs. Naturopathic doctors are the **only** physicians trained in the contraindications of herbs and botanicals with pharmaceuticals.

PRIMARY CARE EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The U.S. Secretary of Education recognizes CNME as the national accrediting agency for programs leading to the Doctor of Naturopathic Medicine (ND or NMD) or Doctor of Naturopathy (ND) degree. The program is a resident course of at least 4 years and 4620 hours of study. Clinical education requirements for, as mandated by accreditation agencies, include a minimum of 1200 clock hours in direct patient contact. All licensed naturopathic physicians have matriculated from the CNME approved schools, and successfully passed a national exam administered by the North American Board of Naturopathic Examiners (NABNE).

Both the Department of Education and the Carnegie Institute classify the ND degree under “doctorate-professional” (clinical) on par with the MD and DO degrees.

State Legislatures Address Primary Care Shortage

Six state legislatures designate NDs as primary care givers: Alaska, California, Montana, New Hampshire, Utah, and Vermont. Across the country legislatures are expanding scope and access to naturopathic medicine.

- Arizona, Hawaii, Oregon and Washington allow NDs full prescriptive authority.
- Vermont utilizes NDs in its Medicaid program.
- Hawaii expanded naturopathic scope of practice to include IV Therapy and minor surgery, in addition to prescribing authority.

States are acting to improve health status of its citizens by accessing science and evidenced-based medicine of highly educated and trained (non-MD and DO) providers of primary care.

State of Oregon	Naturopathic Physicians	Family Nurse Practitioners
Scope of Practice	Can diagnose and treat any condition	Can diagnose and treat any condition
Drugs Controlled Drugs	Can prescribe “Legend” drugs Schedule II-V	Can prescribe “Legend” drugs Schedule II-V
Basic and Clinical Sciences	224.50 credits	64 credits
Supervised Clinical Practice	1548 hours	760 hours
Pharmacology	72 hours	45 hours

The doctor shortage in Alaska and nationwide is no secret; this problem will only increase as the population ages. Naturopathic physicians are highly skilled, rigorously trained, licensed health care professionals who stand ready to meet the unmet needs of consumers in urban, rural, and underserved areas.

Sincerely,

Karen Howard,
Executive Director, American Association of Naturopathic Physicians