



ALASKA ACADEMY OF FAMILY PHYSICIANS

35555 Spur Highway #266, Soldotna, AK 99669 akafp@gci.net www.alaskaafp.org 907 258-2255 office 530 326-5612 fax

March 15, 2010

Dear Representative Olson:

The Alaska Academy of Family Physicians represents over 360 primary care physicians practicing throughout Alaska. We have serious concerns about House Bill 282, which grants further medical and surgical privileges to naturopaths. By definition naturopaths practice holistic medicinal treatments limited to natural herbs and nutraceuticals not regulated by the FDA. That is their training, their experience, and their stated mission. Surgical procedures are considered invasive and not “natural.” Prescription medicines are pharmaceutical agents and not under their scope of practice.

Naturopaths state that their education encompasses some course work in pharmacology. However naturopathic training programs clearly do not provide anywhere near the breadth and depth of education when compared to medical and osteopathic medical schools. In addition, they do not require carefully supervised postgraduate residency training for patient care, adverse medical effects, drug interactions, and patient’s safety prior to health care providers being licensed to practice independently. The same argument goes for surgical interventions where focused supervised procedural training is the accepted norm. This is essential for assuring patient safety and competent providers. Continuing medical education and recertification are the norm in the medical profession. We know of no such requirements for naturopaths and this current house bill is inadequate to assure patient safety and quality of care.

This is clearly an issue of public safety. With the small number of naturopaths in this state and limited number of primary care providers this is not a “turf” issue. It is however, a Pandora’s box for our state considering these important scope of practice issues. In these times, the daily headlines are focusing on enhanced patient safety. It makes little practical or legal sense to license providers with minimal if any professional training in the complexities of drug prescribing and surgical interventions to perform these services for our fellow Alaskans.

To document the equivalence of such different training programs seems to be impossible. The only way I can imagine is to require naturopaths to take the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) and have the same scores that would allow admission to M.D. or D.O. training programs. It would also be necessary to pass the same National Certification Tests (USMLE, COMLEX, PANCE, etc.) to document a minimum of training and education. The same credentialing, continuing medical education requirements and oversight provided by the State Medical Board would also add to the reassurance that public safety is being protected. A separate licensing board for these providers is inappropriate.

I am certain this is also your goal and request you to reconsider this bill. Because of these concerns we must oppose House Bill 282.

Sincerely,

Mary Ann Foland, M.D.
President, Alaska Academy of Family Physicians