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ref HB28

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March 3, 2010

The Honorable Kurt Olson
Chair, House Labor and Commerce
State Capitol Building, Room 24
Juneau AK 99801

Dear Representative Olson,

Thank you for your consideration in hearing HB 282, an act relating to naturopaths, with intent to promote improved access for all Alaskans to safe, effective, health promoting therapies. Naturopathic Medicine is continuously evolving, deeply wedded to evidence based practices, and built on a foundation of thoroughly trained health scientists.

I enclose for your review a document comparing MD/DO education and that of naturopathic doctors in the 21st century. Also attached is a book list for students enrolled in US DOE-accredited institutions of higher learning which offer the doctorate degree in Naturopathic Medicine.

As you may know, in 2006 the American Medical Association (AMA) undertook a massive, well funded, effort to restrict the scope of practice of 10 "ancillary" healthcare professionals, including PAs and ANPs. The SOPP document is especially vitriolic, and inaccurate, in discussing Naturopathic Medicine. I would like the opportunity to offer referenced corrections to many of the gross mischaracterizations of Naturopathic Medicine in the SOPP document which you recently received from Dr. Brion Beerle.

I mention Physician Assistants and Advanced Nurse Practitioners because both of these mid-level medical professionals have enjoyed expanded scope in Alaska, to no detriment to the wellbeing of Alaskans. Please note, moreover, that PAs capture their degree with 2 years of post-college training, and that ANPs also hold master's level degrees. This is in contrast to Naturopathic Doctors, who have doctorate level training (at least 4 years, plus a year of preceptorship – our word for residency) after achieving a bachelor's degree from an accredited 4-year undergraduate college. My intention is not to undermine the usefulness or training of my mid-level professional colleagues. It is to point out that Naturopathic Doctors are highly trained, and there already exist strict standards for our practice in Alaska. Further, there exists precedent for Naturopathic Physicians being registered with the federal Drug Enforcement Agency, and also for NDs to serve Medicaid patients.

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In Alaska, however, we are underutilized. Properly trained and licensed NDs (Alaskan law does not permit any of the ANMA-variety "traditional" naturopaths to practice here) are indeed part of the answer to our failing healthcare delivery system. We have deep and broad training in pharmacology not so much because we turn to drugs primarily for therapy – we have very effective and generally much safer, less expensive treatment modalities – but because we see patients taking multiple prescriptive medications daily. Many of these patients are unwell, and we are uniquely positioned to help them transition to less dependence on pharmaceuticals which may be undermining, not always supporting, their health. We employ the most effective and least harmful therapy to our patients at every encounter. Sometimes that means choosing legend drugs, and sometimes it means modifying drug use. Naturopathic physicians specialize not only in comprehensive and holistic approaches to medicine, but in individualized protocols for each and every patient. There is no "one size fits all" fix; each patient is considered in their entirety, with all their personal physical and psycho-social history.

Most of the licensed NDs in Alaska have been serving the constituents for at least a decade. I personally have been in practice in Juneau for over 15 years, with over 12 years of professional affiliation with our regional hospital. Integrated models of healthcare are burgeoning all over the country. The consumers are demanding it and in response many MD/DOs are actually practicing elements of naturopathic medicine with much less training than we receive! Just to be clear – at a national policy level, naturopathic physicians welcome integrative care. We share patients with MDs, DOs, ANPs, and chiropractors, acupuncturists, massage therapists, etc. One of the most important aspects of my job is to "case manage" or help integrate the care of my patients with their many providers.

Thank you for your attention. I look forward to further explaining my training and commitment to providing safe, effective, patient-centered, health-promoting protocols for all Alaskans.

Best wishes,



Dr. Emily A. Kane
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Licensed Acupuncturist

Attachments:

- 1) comparison of medical education MD/DO and ND
- 2) representative textbook list for the contemporary ND curriculum
- 3) US Department of Labor definition of Naturopathic Physician 2009