

NATURAL HEALTH

ALASKA ASSOCIATION OF NATUROPATHIC PHYSICIANS

WINTER / 2010 / AKANP.ORG

THE NATUROPATHIC APPROACH TO TREATING DIABETES

Our national love affair with sugary, highly processed foods, coupled with sedentary lifestyles, has lead to a diabetes epidemic. According to the American Diabetes Association 23.6 million individuals had diabetes as of 2007, costing the country \$174 billion in direct and indirect medical costs. The majority of diabetes cases – 95 percent – are type II, which is largely preventable through diet and exercise. Naturopathic doctors, with their unique expertise in clinical nutrition, botanical medicine, and counseling are poised to play an important role in fighting this epidemic.

Naturopathic doctors work to educate patients on their condition to ensure patients take responsibility for their own health. This approach is particularly effective for diabetics, because diabetic patients must closely monitor their diet, exercise patterns, and blood sugar levels to stay healthy. “Medical doctors recommend exercise, but they don’t teach people how to do it,” says Mona Morestein, ND and diabetes expert. “And they don’t check in to see if it’s happening. Naturopathic doctors spend time

with our patients and see them frequently. It enhances results.” Mainstream medicine agrees - a 2001 study in Diabetes Care found that diabetes patients that received frequent follow up calls had better health outcomes than those who did not.



Naturopathic medicine also addresses a key problem for diabetics that conventional medicine overlooks – nutritional deficiencies. The American Diabetes Association does not currently recommend supplementation for diabetes, even though numerous studies have found that diabetics are deficient in nutrients and could benefit from supplementation. A 2005 study published in Diabetes Care showed that vitamin C, vitamin E, magnesium, and zinc helped prevent glomerular nephropathy in type II diabetics. A 2008 study, also published in Diabetes Care, found that Alpha Lipoic Acid reduces blood sugars and prevents and treats neuropathy. And a 2007 study published in

Metabolism found that chromium can help diabetics metabolize carbohydrates, especially when they have severe insulin resistance.

Naturopathic protocols can also help prevent diabetes before it starts. According to a commentary published in the Journal of Natural Medicine in October 2009, a combination of treatments can help reverse pre-diabetes, including using supplements to improve insulin function, exercise, stress management techniques; and keeping well-hydrated. In the commentary, the natural treatment regime not only improved sugar insulin performance – it strengthened patients’ own self-healing abilities by improving their immune systems and correcting nutritional deficiencies.

To find out more about how naturopathic doctors can help fight diabetes in your state, contact your state association.

**This article was compiled with assistance from Dr. Mona Morestein, ND.*



Alaska Association of Naturopathic Physicians, Inc.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

BREAKING NEWS...

NATUROPATHIC DOCTORS – PRIMARY CARE FOR ALASKA



Alaska trails national averages on various measures of health. High rates of alcoholism, obesity, diabetes and suicide plague our state. To improve the health of our citizens, Alaskans must have access to seasoned health care professionals. But there is a national shortage of primary care doctors in the United States, including Alaska.

Naturopathic doctors (NDs) are preventively-oriented, primary health-care providers and have actively served Alaskans since 1984. But the law governing NDs is outdated and does not allow these professionals to use all their training. Senate Bill 70, sponsored by Sen. Bettye Davis, would allow for the creation of a board of three NDs, one pharmacist and one MD, to address this discrepancy. The board would prioritize updating legislation to permit a broader scope of services to safely, effectively and inexpensively improve the health and well being of Alaskans. The bill would allow NDs to serve Medicaid patients. The companion house bill is sponsored by Representative Cathy Munoz.

We ask for your consideration and support of these bills.

To learn more, visit www.akanp.org.

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MAXIMIZING USE OF AMERICA'S EXISTING HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS

Health care reform won't happen without increased access to care. The Association of American Medical Colleges estimates by the year 2025, the nation will need an additional 124,000 full-time physicians. But obtaining medical care should not be such a challenge. There are more than three million licensed health care professionals in the United States who are not permitted to perform services commensurate with their full level and scope of training. Naturopathic physicians, even in Oregon, Washington, and Arizona with their robust primary care scope of practice, are excluded from providing care to much of the underserved, uninsured and underinsured populations.

The American Medical Association is opposed to most increases in scopes for health care workers, including naturopathic physicians. But it is counterintuitive to prevent trained health professionals from providing needed services, as millions of Americans go without care. Allowing health care providers to practice to the full scope of their training increases the number of medical professionals who can treat many common and chronic diseases. This also allows increased patient access to medical doctors, to whom can be referred more complex cases.

Many state legislators have agreed, and have expanded their definition of "primary care provider" to include more than just medical doctors. Six states have already defined naturopathic physicians as primary care providers, including California, Montana, New Hampshire, Utah, Vermont and Washington. Citizens of these states have reaped the benefits; all six states are in the top 50 percent of the Washington Health Foundation's 2008 Healthiest State Report Card. And four of the six states ranked in the top 10. In Vermont and Washington naturopathic physicians are covered by state Medicaid plans as primary care providers.

Several state legislatures have also passed legislation to expand the scope of practice for health care workers. In 2009, the Hawaii legislature voted to expand the scope of practice for naturopathic physicians regarding parenteral therapy, formulary, and minor surgery. The Hawaii Board of Examiners in Naturopathy gained the authority to determine which prescription drugs naturopathic physicians can prescribe, and establish requirements for administering IV therapies and performing minor surgical procedures. Also in 2009, Oregon legislators expanded prescribing rights for naturopathic physicians.

State legislators have also begun to recognize additional types of health care providers. In the past ten years, seven states and US territories have recognized naturopathic physicians, providing them with licensure or registration mechanisms and allowing them to diagnose and treat patients. Most recently, in 2008, Minnesota recognized naturopathic physicians. Now, naturopathic physicians in Minnesota have a broad diagnostic scope, which includes physical examination, clinical laboratory tests, ordering of imaging, treatment with dietary supplements and other natural substances, and performance of minor office procedures.

America is surely facing a health care crisis, but the perceived deficit in health care providers can be mitigated by state laws that increase scope and provide recognition for well-trained providers. For more information about licensure and scope expansion efforts in your state, please visit www.naturopathic.org.



HOW ARE NATUROPATHIC DOCTORS EDUCATED?



Q/ ARE NATUROPATHIC PHYSICIANS RECOGNIZED AS HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT?

A/ Yes. The U.S. Department of Labor's O*NET program, the nation's primary source of occupational information, issued report 29-1199.04, designating Naturopathic Physicians as a profession in 2009. The O*NET program, which is the gold standard for professional data collection, will be collecting information on the naturopathic profession. This new definition is dramatically expanded from the previous definition, and reflects the extensive scope of practice of naturopathic doctors who have attended accredited naturopathic medical schools.

Q/ HOW DOES THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR DEFINE "NATUROPATHIC PHYSICIAN"?

A/ The Department of Labor defines naturopathic physicians as follows: "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."

Q/ HOW MANY ADDITIONAL NATUROPATHIC PHYSICIANS DOES THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR PROJECT ARE NECESSARY TO MEET THE NATION'S FUTURE HEALTH CARE NEEDS?

A/ The Department of Labor projects a need of 19,000 additional naturopathic physicians by 2016.

DID YOU KNOW?

COMMON MIGRAINE TRIGGERS AND PREVENTION TECHNIQUES

BY MELISSA MCCARTY, ND

The migraine headache is poorly understood, but it is generally believed that an individual's levels of the neurotransmitter serotonin drop in response to certain triggers, leading to enlargement and inflammation of the blood vessels in the head, resulting in head pain. Natural ways to prevent and treat migraines include:

- Know your migraine triggers: foods that trigger migraines are commonly identified through an elimination diet, in which the most common problematic foods are taken out of the diet for up to three weeks and then reintroduced one-by-one to see if the migraines return.
- Preventive supplementation: current research supports the use of riboflavin (vitamin B2), feverfew, butterbur, magnesium and CoQ10 in decreasing both the frequency and severity of migraine headaches in many patients.
- CranioSacral therapy, a physical treatment, can be effective in prevention and treatment because it can ease restrictions in the skull.
- Ensuring proper amounts of sleep and exercise, managing stress and eating regularly can help prevent migraines.