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# SECTION 1: FOUNDATIONAL BASIS OF THE NATUROPATHIC PROFESSION

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## HIGHLIGHTS

- Naturopathic practice uses a distinct assessment, diagnosis and treatment approach to healthcare.
- Naturopathy is defined by two philosophies and seven principles and naturopathic care is guided by distinct naturopathic theories.
- Naturopathic care is individualized to each patient and uses a range of therapeutic modalities and practices.
- Naturopaths/naturopathic doctors treat patients throughout the span of their life. Naturopathic care focuses on prevention and chronic conditions, but also in the treatment of acute conditions and patients in palliative care.

Naturopathy is a distinct traditional and complementary system of medicine practiced around the world with strong historical and cultural roots in Europe. Naturopathic practice was strongly influenced by traditional nature cure practices which date back prior to the 18th century and which are based on the observation of how plants and animals survive and interact with their environment. Nature cure practices use natural elements to treat disease and to promote health. These nature cure elements include hydrotherapy, herbal medicine and nutrition and they have had a strong influence on the naturopathic profession as it formalized as a distinct system of medicine at the end of the 19th century in Germany and at the beginning of the 20th century in North America. Naturopathy quickly expanded to the Western Pacific, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean and throughout the rest of Europe.

The naturopathic profession encompasses both naturopathy and naturopathic medicine. The global naturopathic workforce has unanimously identified a common philosophical and traditional knowledge framework and a set of core therapeutic modalities and practices as being the foundation to naturopathic practice despite some educational differences, as well as jurisdiction-specific regulation and restrictions. This chapter introduces key concepts that underpin naturopathic practice.

**Naturopathic Practice (Chapter 1)** provides an overview of naturopathic practice with a focus on the assessment, diagnosis and treatment approach used by naturopaths/naturopathic doctors. *Naturopathic clinical assessment* is person-centered with the goal of determining the factors contributing to a patient's state of health and their symptoms and conditions. It involves investigation into lifestyle, social, environmental, external and

genetic factors, and the impact of medical interventions. Naturopaths/naturopathic doctors employ a range of assessment tools including a thorough case history, standard conventional physical examinations and laboratory testing along with traditional naturopathic assessment techniques such as tongue and pulse diagnosis. The three main goals of a naturopathic assessment are to (1) determine the factors contributing to a patient's state of health, their symptoms and/or diseases; (2) collect the proper information to inform a naturopathic diagnosis and (3) assess the patient's vitality and state of wellbeing.

A *naturopathic diagnosis* is the summation and interpretation of the findings from the naturopathic clinical assessment. The three primary and interrelated purposes of a naturopathic diagnosis are to (1) accurately categorize the symptoms, condition and/or disease-state using biomedical terminology and diagnostic criteria along with traditional naturopathic diagnostic concepts; (2) determine the underlying causes of the patient's symptoms, conditions, or disease-state; and (3) determine the patient's vitality and healing ability.

Naturopathic practice has always been therapeutically diverse in its approach to healing with the core therapeutic *modalities and practices* including:

- Applied nutrition
- Clinical nutrition
- Herbal medicine
- Lifestyle modification
- Mind-Body Medicine counselling
- Naturopathic physical medicine
- Hydrotherapy
- Acupuncture
- Yoga

Other therapies, such as Intravenous Therapies, regenerative therapies and other therapeutics may also be used by naturopaths/naturopathic doctors based on jurisdictional regulations and educational training.

**Naturopathic Philosophies and Principles (Chapter 2)** outlines the philosophical basis that informs naturopathic practice. The naturopathic philosophies – *vitalism* (that there is an innate intelligence of living organisms) and *holism* (that the body is a complex adaptive system that exists as a unified whole) – encompass every aspect of naturopathic care. The seven naturopathic principles also guide naturopathic practice:

- I. First, Do No Harm (*primum non nocere*)
- II. Healing Power of Nature (*vis medicatrix naturae*)
- III. Treat the Cause (*tolle causam*)
- IV. Treat the Whole Person (*tolle totum*)
- V. Doctor as Teacher (*docere*)
- VI. Health Promotion and Disease Prevention
- VII. Wellness and Wellbeing

**Naturopathic Theories (Chapter 3)** outlines key theoretical and conceptual frameworks that inform the clinical reasoning and decision making of naturopaths/naturopathic doctors. The main theories included are:

- The *Naturopathic Therapeutic Order* which is a systematic approach to treatment that moves from minimally invasive to more forceful treatments as necessary.
- The *Emunctory Theory* which outlines that toxic substances can be absorbed from the environment or produced by abnormal metabolic processes and must be effectively eliminated to achieve good health.
- The *Theory of Complex Systems* which outlines that the body is a complex and self-sustaining dynamic and evolving system functioning within an environment of multiple nested systems which are interconnected, and treatment must reflect this.

# 1

# Naturopathic Practice

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## HIGHLIGHTS

- Naturopathic assessment is a person-centered process that focuses on assessing a patient's health status, on identifying factors contributing to patient symptoms and/or diseases and on assessing a patient's vitality and wellbeing.
- Naturopathic diagnosis draws upon biomedical and traditional profession-specific diagnostic methods to understand a patient's health status and to determine the underlying causes, as well as a patient's vitality and sense of wellbeing.
- The naturopathic workforce employs a range of treatment modalities in their individualized and multi-modal integrative approach to patient care.
- It is common for naturopaths/NDs to perform or prescribe four or more different treatments during a naturopathic visit.
- The most common therapeutic modalities used internationally by naturopaths/NDs are *lifestyle modification*, *applied nutrition*, *clinical nutrition*, and *herbal medicine*.

Naturopathy/naturopathic medicine is a distinct health-care system with a defined approach specific to naturopathic assessment, diagnosis, and treatment. There is a high degree of consistency in the foundational basis of naturopathic practice, but there are educational and regulatory variances in each country that result in differences in the breadth of assessments performed by naturopaths/naturopathic doctors, their ability to provide patients with a naturopathic diagnosis, and in the therapeutic modalities and practices used by naturopaths/naturopathic doctors (NDs).

## Naturopathic Assessment

The naturopathic clinical assessment is a person-centred process focused on determining how a patient's symptoms, condition and disease-state are presenting on the multidimensional levels of the individual and their social interactions. There are three distinct goals to a naturopathic assessment [1, 2].

1. Determining the factors contributing to a patient's state of health, their symptoms and/or diseases.
2. Collecting the proper information to inform a naturopathic diagnosis.
3. Assessing the patient's vitality and state of wellbeing.

When treating the whole person, a naturopathic assessment incorporates the comprehensive range of

factors encompassed by the Treat the Cause (*tolle causam*) principle. These include addressing lifestyle factors (e.g. nutritional status, hydration, posture, sleep, breathing, hygiene, movement); family history and genetic factors; social interactions (e.g. family dynamics, community and school or work factors, mental and emotional status); environmental factors (e.g. exposure to environmental pollutants, pathogens, and time spent outside); external influences (e.g. accidents and injuries, life events, hobbies, exposure to electromagnetic frequency devices and toxins in household and personal products); and medical treatments (e.g. medications and supplements, history of surgeries and medical treatments) [1, 2].

Naturopathic assessments are commonly longer than visits with biomedical practitioners and emphasise a holistic patient-centered approach that considers the patient's perspective and their experience of their health condition [3]. Naturopaths/naturopathic doctors employ methods of assessment and diagnosis drawn directly from naturopathic training, other traditional and complementary systems of healthcare, and biomedicine. The training and scope of practice, and the specific regulation in each jurisdiction influences the specific assessment tools employed and a naturopaths/naturopathic doctor's ability to diagnose. Generally speaking, a naturopathic assessment includes [1]:

- Detailed personal and health history.
- Assessment of a patient's diet and nutritional status,

level of exercise and other lifestyle factors.

- Assessment of a patient’s mental and emotional status and sense of wellbeing.
- Assessment of the emunctory pathways.
- Information related to environmental exposures and unique environmental conditions associated with where the person lives and has lived.
- History of previous accidents, injuries, external influences, medical procedures, prescription medications and surgeries and the potential for contraindications when using naturopathic treatments.
- Diagnostic techniques may include tongue, iris, and pulse diagnosis as well as other diagnostic methods consistent with the training and scope of practice in each Region.<sup>1</sup>
- A physical examination using traditional and biomedical diagnostic methods.<sup>2</sup>
- Laboratory testing.<sup>3</sup>
- Referral to another allied healthcare professional or specialist for aspects of the assessment may occur, depending on the scope of practice in each jurisdiction and the specific needs of each patient.

## Naturopathic Diagnosis

A naturopathic diagnosis is the summation and interpretation of the findings from the naturopathic clinical assessment. Naturopaths/naturopathic doctors combine evidence-based biomedical approaches to diagnostics with traditional profession-specific diagnostic methods. There are three primary and interrelated purposes to a naturopathic diagnosis [1]:

1. To accurately categorize the symptoms, condition and/or disease-state using traditional naturopathic diagnostic concepts along with biomedical terminology and diagnostic criteria.
2. To determine the underlying causes of the patient’s symptoms, conditions, or disease-state.
3. To determine the patient’s vitality and healing ability.

Naturopathic practice recognizes that health and disease are a continuum, and in the absence of a clearly defined conventional diagnosis, a naturopathic diagnosis may classify a patient’s symptoms based on the characteristic pattern of their symptoms and the causal factors.

It is important to note that in some jurisdictions, naturopaths/naturopathic doctors’ use of the terms *diagnosis* and *diseases* are restricted and, hence, the

naturopathic diagnosis in these Regions focuses more on the assessment of health status, characteristic (or constitutional) patterns and the causes of diseases.

## Therapeutic Modalities and Practices

Naturopathic care is an integrative clinical practice tailored to each individual patient based on the unique factors identified in the naturopathic assessment and classified in the naturopathic diagnosis. Naturopathic practice has always been known for its range of practices and treatment modalities [1]. Naturopaths/naturopathic doctors recognize that an integrated approach to healing and disease management provides the best foundation for optimal health and that focusing on changes that patients can integrate into their life, including a greater sense of wellbeing and self-care, are important aspects of naturopathic care [1]. It is common for naturopaths/naturopathic doctors to perform or prescribe four or more different treatments during a naturopathic visit [4].

A 2021 international survey across all WHO Regions investigated the practice characteristics and behaviours of naturopaths/naturopathic doctors [3]. The study found naturopaths/naturopathic doctors ‘always’ or ‘most of the time’ reported prescribing or recommending lifestyle modifications, dietary changes, nutritional supplements and herbal medicines. Counselling and psychotherapy, and manual therapies were also reported by more than one quarter of naturopaths/naturopathic doctors. Most naturopaths/naturopathic doctors report discussing a range of topics with their patients including diet and nutrition, stress management, sleep, physical activity and fitness, pharmaceuticals and other medications, substance use, counselling and mental health, relationships and support, and environmental health and toxins. The full list of practice behaviours is presented in Table 1.1. These survey findings align with other research conducted by the WNF [1, 4, 5].

A strength of the naturopathic integrated approach to healthcare is its ability to incorporate practices and therapeutic modalities based on regional traditional healthcare practices, on the level of education and regulation in each jurisdiction and based on the unique characteristics of each patient. In Regions that include higher naturopathic educational training and a supportive regulatory environment, naturopathic practice may include

<sup>1</sup> Naturopathic practitioners in Europe are commonly trained in iris analysis (‘iridology’). Naturopaths in many WHO Regions include tongue and pulse diagnosis as part of their naturopathic training.

<sup>2</sup> In some jurisdictions such as North America, naturopathic doctors are trained as primary care practitioners and their scope of practice includes gynecological and pelvic exams, along with standard physical exams.

<sup>3</sup> Laboratory testing can include standard blood and urine tests, hair mineral analysis, detailed testing of stool, saliva, and other secretions. Some naturopathic doctors are also trained to interpret radiological reports and scans as part of their assessment.

Table 1.1: Frequency naturopaths/naturopathic doctors report engaging in practice behaviours ‘always’ or ‘most of the time’ (n=478)

Practice behaviour	Always/Most of the time
<b>Prescription/recommendation</b>	<i>N (%)</i>
<i>Lifestyle modification</i>	437 (91.4%)
<i>Dietary changes</i>	429 (89.8%)
<i>Nutritional supplements</i>	308 (64.4%)
<i>Herbal medicines</i>	287 (60.0%)
<i>Counselling and psychotherapy</i>	132 (27.7%)
<i>Manual therapies</i>	127 (26.5%)
<i>Acupuncture</i>	78 (16.3%)
<i>Hydrotherapy</i>	72 (15.1%)
<i>Other traditional medicine systems</i>	69 (14.5%)
<i>Homeopathy</i>	67 (14.1%)
<i>Injection/intravenous therapies</i>	28 (5.9%)
<b>Discussion topic</b>	
<i>Stress management</i>	432 (90.8%)
<i>Diet and nutrition</i>	429 (90.1%)
<i>Sleep</i>	422 (88.6%)
<i>Physical activity and fitness</i>	422 (88.6%)
<i>Pharmaceuticals and other medication</i>	302 (63.6%)
<i>Counselling and mental health</i>	302 (63.4%)
<i>Relationships and support</i>	286 (60.2%)
<i>Substance use</i>	272 (57.2%)
<i>Environmental health and toxins</i>	234 (49.2%)

therapies such as prescribing rights for pharmaceuticals, bio-identical hormone prescribing, intravenous therapies, regenerative injective therapies, and minor surgery.

In addition to the clinical value of specific naturopathic treatments, patients may also benefit non-specific healing effects associated with the quality and nature of the naturopathic consultation [6]. More details about the naturopathic philosophies and principles are described in Chapter 2. Section 6 also presents a summary of clinical research investigating outcomes of specific naturopathic therapies and practices, including clinical trials that control for non-specific healing effects. The therapeutic modalities and practices further explored in Section 6 are outlined below.

*Applied nutrition* involves the modification of dietary patterns and food choices with the goal of optimizing nutritional status in the treatment and/or prevention of disease. Naturopathic applied nutritional interventions include diet therapy (therapeutic diets, fasting and individualized diet modification), therapeutic application of specific foods and behavioural and lifestyle counselling related to eating behaviours [7]. Naturopathic practice incorporates the scientific and empirical knowledge of food and nutrition, it recognizes the value of whole foods beyond their individual constituents, as well as

the traditional knowledge of food as a form of medicine and the importance of considering the constitution and uniqueness of every patient, the thoughts, and emotions that they have around food and where they live.

*Clinical nutrition* is the use of therapeutic products (e.g., tablets, powders and liquids) of vitamins, minerals and food-based extracts with health-promoting, disease-preventing or medicinal properties for targeted clinical outcomes [8]. Naturopaths/naturopathic doctors may employ clinical nutrition interventions to address identified nutritional insufficiencies, or to initiate biochemical or physiological changes in response to the patient’s specific health conditions or complaints [9]. Clinical nutrition can be applied by increasing levels of a wide range of vitamins and minerals (e.g., multivitamins); the application of specialized formulas developed for explicit health purposes and effects; or the use of single nutrients targeting specific patient needs. Naturopaths/naturopathic doctors may recommend or prescribe commercially-produced nutritional products, or extemporaneous dispense compounded nutritional ingredients formulated specifically for the individual patient [9, 10].

*Herbal medicine* ranges from herbs as food, the prescription of single herbs (either in whole form or various extracts or the use of unaltered constituents from

these sources) and compounded formulations with more than one herbal remedy. Herbs may be prescribed as pre-formulated proprietary products (i.e., commercially produced formulas), or dispensed extemporaneously (i.e., compounded onsite for the specific needs of the individual patient). Herbs can be prescribed internally as part of diet, as teas, tinctures, essential oils, or tablets/capsules, and can also be used topically in creams, oils and in poultices and compresses. Also referred to as *botanical medicine*, *phytotherapy* or *phytomedicine*.

**Lifestyle modification** consists of the application of environmental, psychological, and behavioural principles to enhance wellbeing. These principles may be applied through exercise prescription and postural awareness; the modification of diet; advocacy for minimized exposure to tobacco smoking, alcohol, and other illicit substances; and guidelines for the regulation of the sleep-wake cycle through addressing work-rest balance and recreation [11]. Significant considerations of note also include activity scheduling, which encourages meaningful social engagement [12]. Environmental factors are also significant considerations and may be targeted by advocating for reduced exposure to air, water, and noise pollution, and encouraging time spent in nature.

**Mind-Body Medicine (MBM) Counselling** comprises a variety of practices designed to enhance the mind's positive impact on the body and vice versa, including behavioural, psychological, social, artistic, and spiritual approaches [13, 14]. The practice of MBM is based on the understanding that the mind influences the physical body and conversely the physical influences the state of the mind. MBM practices include yoga, tai chi, or meditation, which have been part of traditional medicine for several hundred to thousand years and more recent practices such as mindfulness stress reduction (MBSR).

**Naturopathic physical medicine** includes various forms of hands-on therapies ranging from muscle release and massage techniques, physical manipulation, and other bodywork techniques. Some naturopaths/naturopathic doctors provide naturopathic physical medicine as part of their practice directly with patients while others work with various bodywork practitioners to provide patients with a holistic and an integrated approach to healthcare.

**Hydrotherapy** is the application of water for therapeutic purposes. Hydrotherapy can be used externally, which includes compresses, baths (balneotherapy or thalassotherapy) and sprays; and internally, which includes inhalations and colon hydrotherapy [15]. It is a completely drugless therapy that supports the body's healing processes primarily through the manipulation of blood circulation through thermic and mechanical means. Some therapies also use water as a medium for transfer of minerals, herbal remedies or other therapeutic agents. The treatment effect of hydrotherapy is based on the specific application of either cold or hot water or

the alternating of cold and hot water compresses and is designed to generally be sedative in acute disease and stimulative in chronic [16].

**Acupuncture** is practiced in several different ways including needling, electroacupuncture, auricular acupuncture, acupressure, cupping and/or moxibustion. Needle acupuncture includes the insertion of needles along meridian channels on the body based on Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) philosophy. Auricular acupuncture is a technique whereby points in the ear are needled or where acupuncture 'seeds' or tiny needles are applied to specific points on the ear. Acupressure uses the same philosophical basis as acupuncture, but instead of needles, pressure is applied to acupuncture points. Acupressure allows practitioners with regulatory restrictions, to still practice a form of acupuncture. Cupping traditionally uses continuous suction, but modern devices also allow for pulsating suction or the sliding of cups along the skin. Other techniques that fall under TCM include moxibustion which is the burning of herbs near or on the body, *Tui na*, a therapeutic type of TCM massage, and *Gua sha* therapy, a healing method which involves scraping the skin. A stimulation pad or device is another modern means of using the principles of acupuncture for pain relief that may be safely applied at home.

**Yoga** is a philosophically based practice and a blend of physical and mental disciplines. Traditionally Yoga incorporates physical *asanas* (postures) and practices, but also *pranayama* (breathing exercises), *nidra* (chanting), *kriyas* (cleansing activities), and *dhyana* (meditation), as well as other meditation, spirituality, and dietary and lifestyle modifications that support harmony and balance within the whole person. The term Yoga refers to both the entire process of these practices and the goal or end-point philosophically [17].

## Summary

Naturopaths/naturopathic doctors treat patients across their lifespan, including those with acute and chronic conditions and those seeking preventive and/or palliative healthcare. Naturopathic practice is person-centered with a detailed focus on the assessment process and on identifying the causes of disease as part of a naturopathic diagnosis. Naturopathic practice is defined by a cohesive philosophical and principles-based foundation and naturopathic care employs a range of therapies and practices to meet individual treatment goals. Common therapeutic modalities and practices employed by naturopaths and naturopathic doctors include applied nutrition, clinical nutrition, herbal medicines, lifestyle counselling, hydrotherapy, naturopathic physical medicine, and other therapies and practices depending on jurisdictional regulations and naturopathic medical training.

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# 2

## Naturopathic Philosophies and Principles

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### HIGHLIGHTS

- The naturopathic philosophies of *vitalism* (an innate intelligence of living organisms) and *holism* (the body is a complex adaptive system that exists as a unified whole) are core to naturopathic practice.
- There are seven naturopathic principles that guide every aspect of naturopathic care:
  - I. First, Do No Harm (*primum non nocere*)
  - II. Healing Power of Nature (*vis medicatrix naturae*)
  - III. Treat the Cause (*tolle causam*)
  - IV. Treat the Whole Person (*tolle totum*)
  - V. Doctor as Teacher (*docere*)
  - VI. Health Promotion and Disease Prevention
  - VII. Wellness and Wellbeing

The naturopathic profession shares historical and cultural roots with early Western medicine, and it has become particularly adept at integration and translation within biomedical settings, whilst remaining true to its traditional philosophies and principles. It is the integration of naturopathic philosophies and principles within a biomedical understanding of health and disease that defines the naturopathic profession. Applying natural therapeutic modalities and practices through the lens of naturopathic principles, philosophies and theories, rather than prescribing natural remedies using a biomedical approach, is what differentiates naturopathy/naturopathic medicine from other systems of medicines.

## Naturopathic Philosophies

*Vitalism* and *holism* are the core naturopathic philosophies that guide every aspect of naturopathic care [1-3].

### Vitalism

*Vitalism* is based on the concept that living organisms are fundamentally different from non-living entities in that the origin and phenomena of life involves a force or

energy distinct from and in addition to the physical or chemical elements of life [4]. The application of *vitalism* within naturopathy/naturopathic medicine is based on the understanding that the body has an innate ability to heal, and that life, health and disease follow certain laws and principles that are logical and innate [1, 5]. Vitalism postulates that there is a self-organizing principle within all life and recognizes that life is ordered and intelligent [1, 6]. The innate intelligence of the human body animates every individual and refers to forces that not only include but go beyond the physical or chemical self in governing life, health, and healing. Naturopathic practice aims to facilitate and augment this process by identifying and removing the obstacles to health and recovery, and by supporting the creation of healthy internal and external environments [6].

### Holism

The philosophy of *holism* underpins naturopathic practice and recognizes that to achieve health the whole person must be treated. *Holistic/holism* means ‘all’, ‘entire’ or ‘total’. It is grounded in the realization that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts [1, 5, 7] and that the body is a complex adaptive system that exists as a unified whole and must be dealt with as an integrated model in

order to be fully understood [8].

The holistic approach of naturopathic practice recognizes that the spiritual, psychological, functional, and structural aspects of a person are interdependent. When treating an individual, the holistic approach treats intrapersonal and interpersonal dynamics, as well as the interaction of each person with their environment, external influences, and social interactions [1, 7, 9, 10]. A naturopathic practitioner views the human body holistically, recognizing that changes in one part of the body will result in corresponding changes in another part. For example naturopaths/naturopathic doctors understand a disruption of the gut microbiome can negatively affect mood and memory, or that joint pain and digestive function is impacted by emotions and stress [1]. An example of applying *holism* to clinical practice is when naturopaths/naturopathic doctors are providing first-line or auxiliary care for high blood pressure they would concurrently assess and proactively address any causal factors that may be contributing to the patients hypertension such as diet, sedentary lifestyle, extreme exercise, stress, environmental pollutants, etc. [1, 11].

## Naturopathic Principles

Naturopathic practice is characterised by the consistent application of seven fundamental distinct yet inter-related principles which complement the naturopathic philosophies of *vitalism* and *holism*.

The naturopathic principles are [1]:

- I. First, Do No Harm (*primum non nocere*)
- II. Healing Power of Nature (*vis medicatrix naturae*)
- III. Treat the Cause (*tolle causam*)
- IV. Treat the Whole Person (*tolle totum*)
- V. Doctor as Teacher (*docere*)
- VI. Health Promotion and Disease Prevention
- VII. Wellness and Wellbeing

Various philosophies and theories have been long-standing parts of naturopathic practice since its inception. While the naturopathic principles have been fundamental to naturopathic practice throughout this time, their formal codification was initiated in 1989 by a professional formation initiative led by naturopathic doctors in North America [1]. The codifying of these principles were based on historical traditional knowledge, writings of earlier naturopaths and naturopathic philosophers, and a review of contemporary naturopathic concepts [7]. A 2015 survey of the global naturopathic profession indicated that there was global consensus on the naturopathic principles as they pertain to naturopathic practice [12] (see Figure 2.1). A seventh principle, “wellness and wellbeing” was later added to this definition and is included in the teachings of several naturopathic programs around the world [13].

### First, Do No Harm

(*primum non nocere*)

First, Do No Harm, or *primum non nocere*, is a fundamental concept accepted across different health professions that can be dated back to the *Corpus Hippocraticum* [1].

Naturopathic practitioners approach this principle following three precepts for avoiding harm [1, 14]:

1. By utilizing practices, therapeutics and treatments which minimize the risk of harmful effects and applying the least possible force or intervention necessary to assess, diagnose and/or to treat illness and restore optimal health.
2. In acute situations and when the body is overwhelmed, short-term suppression of symptoms may be required. However, whenever safe to do so, the suppression of symptoms is avoided as this is understood to interfere with the healing process.
3. Respecting and working with the *vis medicatrix naturae* in all facets of naturopathic assessment, diagnosis, and treatment.

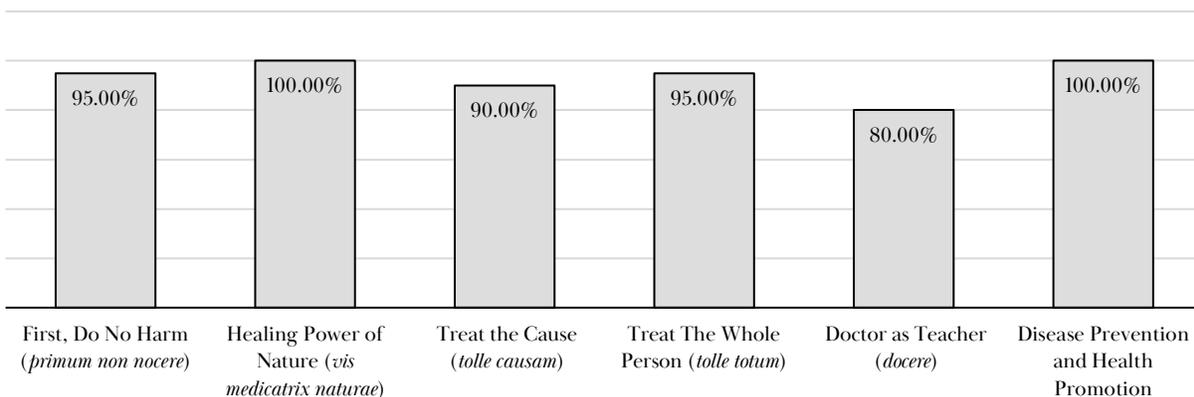


Figure 2.1: Global consensus of naturopathic principles reported by naturopathic professional associations [12]

The principle of *First, Do No Harm* also requires naturopaths/naturopathic doctors to teach patients about the necessary insights and awareness of their lifestyle choices, their environment, their social relationships, and that all aspects of their life are interrelated and have the potential to affect their health and/or to contribute to either health or disease. This principle also includes educating patients about their disease and its associated risks/potential harm [1, 14].

## Healing Power of Nature (*vis medicatrix naturae*)

It is the naturopath's/naturopathic doctor's role to support, facilitate and augment the *Healing Power of Nature* (*vis medicatrix naturae*) by identifying the obstacles that need to be removed to support health and recovery, by supporting and educating a patient towards the creation of a healthy lifestyle and healthy internal and external environments and by working with patients to ensure that their mind is supporting wellness and wellbeing [1, 15]. When the root causes of symptoms and the obstacles to cure are identified and addressed, the body is able to initiate its innate healing process. With lifestyle changes and the use of natural therapies such as herbal medicines, optimal nutrition, adequate hydration, exercise and bodywork, the *vis medicatrix naturae*, the healing power of the body, is supported [5].

The *vis medicatrix naturae* explains the intrinsic and innate healing processes within every individual. Naturopathic practice is based on the recognition that, when provided with the building blocks to health, the human body possesses a natural ability to resist most diseases, and an inherent mechanisms of recovery and self-regulation [16]. Henry Lindlahr (1862-1924), a renowned proponent of natural therapeutics and a hydrotherapist from Germany, stated that the *vis medicatrix naturae* "endeavours to repair, to heal and to restore obstructions and to establish normal conditions, so that the healer within can do his work to the best advantage" [15].

There are numerous examples of the *vis medicatrix naturae* in human health including:

- When a finger is cut the wound starts to heal due to the innate inflammatory cascade which releases chemicals that stop the bleeding and initiates tissue repair.
- Fever is a natural response to an infection; where the benefits of experiencing the febrile state generally outweigh the deleterious effects [17].
- Vomiting or diarrhea is the body's way of responding to food poisoning.
- Fractures, when aligned, often heal on their own.
- Following major surgeries or treatments such as chemotherapy or radiation, the body initiates

healing processes.

## Treat the Cause (*tolle causam*)

Identifying and treating the root cause of disease, and factors aggravating the condition is an essential aspect of naturopathic assessment and Treat the Cause (*tolle causam*) is a principle that stresses the importance of this approach. It is based on the realization that health and disease are logical – they happen for a reason [1]. It recognises that illness is due to one or more causes and that these causes may originate from various aspects of a person's life. Underlying causes of illness and disease must be identified and addressed before complete recovery and healing can occur or before optimal wellness is achieved [15].

As part of their complex multidimensional approach to healthcare, a naturopath or naturopathic doctors explores a range of factors that can impact health and disease including [1, 7, 9, 10]:

- Genetic and developmental factors such as prenatal exposures, intrauterine influences and/or birth traumas.
- Lifestyle behaviours such as nutritional intake and eating regimen, hydration, posture, rest and relaxation, sleep patterns and/or exercise and movement.
- Social interactions include family, school, work, or community dynamics; relationships with others; communication skills including self-talk; and/or ability and freedom to cope with and respond to social conflict and change and economic factors.
- Environmental elements include the quality of air, water, and soil; exposure to environmental chemicals, heavy metals, and other pollutants; pathogens such as viruses, bacteria, mould, or fungi and/or inquiring about the time spent in nature and exposure to sunlight.
- External influences range from accidents and injuries, significant life events, chemicals in personal care products and/or household or gardening products, devices transmitting electromagnetic frequencies, poor ergonomics and/or hobbies and the impact of flying.
- Medical interventions include historical and current use of medical and cosmetic prescription medicines, surgeries and/or other medical treatments.

Naturopathic treatment involves teaching patients that a return to a simpler health-promoting lifestyle can often be the best medicine and an important part of achieving optimal health. To treat the causes of symptoms, it is important to understand not only the genetics, physiology and pathology of symptoms and diseases, but also to identify the emotional impact that they have on each person and how a person thinks about their health and disease [1]. The aim of a naturopathic assessment

is to determine, where possible, the specific trigger, situation, relationship, external influences, environmental factors and/or behaviour that initiated the disruption from health and that needs to be addressed [1, 14].

The body naturally attempts to compensate whenever the internal physiology is out of balance and/or at the onset of disease. This compensation shows up as symptoms and as a disruption in various functions in the body. Naturopaths/naturopathic doctors recognize that the body is complex and logical and they view symptoms as expressions of the body's natural attempt to heal which can provide a road map to the root causes and guide treatment decisions [1].

Naturopaths/naturopathic doctors apply the principle *tolle causam*, or Treat the Cause, by considering the factors apart from medical care that can be influenced by social policies and shape health in powerful ways [17]. This approach overlaps with the well-recognised concept of 'social determinants of health' – defined by the World Health Organization as “the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age...and the fundamental drivers of these conditions” [18, 19].

## Treat the Whole Person (*tolle totum*)

The naturopathic approach to healthcare is “person-centered” [20] and, through the Treat the Whole Person (*tolle totum*) principle, applies a holistic model of care that recognizes the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Naturopathy/naturopathic medicine recognizes the harmonious functioning of all aspects of the individual is essential to optimal health, and that the multifactorial nature of health and disease requires an individualized comprehensive approach to assessment, diagnosis and treatment [1, 15].

Naturopathic consultations generally involve an extended assessment and treatment time [12]. The longer visits allow for a greater depth of understanding of the patient's health issues, the way in which those issues have affected the patient on all levels and the causative factors that have led to the current level of health or disease. The nature of naturopathic consultations requires substantial thought and analysis on the part of the naturopath/naturopathic doctor to understand the role of causal factors and their impact upon the patient's conditions and presenting symptoms [21].

When treating the whole person, a naturopathic assessment incorporates the comprehensive range of factors outlined in the Treat the Cause (*tolle causam*) principle. Naturopathic practice recognizes that the integration of all parts of a person internally and externally contribute to achieving and maintaining health [1]. The naturopathic focus on such innate integration is becoming increasingly recognised in research and

biomedicine as witnessed by concepts such as biopsychosocial, psychoneuroimmunology, psychoneuroendocrinology, and the gut-brain connection, to name a few [22, 23]. These multi-system constructs are reinforcing the interconnectedness within each person and are more suited to a scientific world view that embraces complexity and the emergent nature of complex systems.

## Doctor as Teacher (*docere*)

A principal objective of naturopathic patient education is to empower patients, increase health literacy and encourage patients to become more accountable and capable of maintaining their own health [1, 15]. *Docere*, or “doctor”, comes from the Latin word “to teach”. The role of a naturopath/naturopathic doctor includes educating their patients and the community about factors that affect health and disease so that they are informed about the impact of their choices. They devise a health program for their patients that provides a roadmap from their current health status, instructing their patients on what needs to be addressed in order to maintain or recover health and to achieve optimal wellbeing.

Since inception, the naturopathic encounter has been person-centered and individually focused. Over the last two decades, other health professions and policy-makers have embraced the patient-centered model that has evolved into the now more contemporary concept of person-centered care [24]. The shift from patient-centered to person-centered care arose to include the entirety of an individual's needs beyond just the clinical and medical. Naturopathic practice is, and has always been, in complete accord with a person-centered approach. Rooted in the philosophy of holism, the naturopathic focus is on the individual, the cause(s) of their symptoms and conditions, how the symptom(s) affect other aspects of health and their relationship to their symptoms and conditions. The *docere* principle requires that naturopaths/naturopathic doctors help the patient to understand these issues for themselves, and in doing so, become more empowered to look after their own health. This patient experience of empowerment is a known feature of naturopathic care [20].

Teaching takes time; hence most naturopathic visits allow sufficient time for the naturopath/naturopathic doctor to educate each patient on how to implement and maintain the behavioural changes needed to achieve wellness [1, 21]. Many patients wish to understand the reason they are sick, what they can do to improve their situation and what they need to change for future health [25]. This awareness, motivation and understanding determines long-term health and is predicated on the knowledge level of the naturopath/naturopathic doctor.

## Health Promotion and Disease Prevention

The prevention of disease and the attainment of optimal health are primary objectives of naturopathic practice [1]. Working with individuals and communities to maintain health and optimize wellness through all stages of the life cycle is a core concept in naturopathic care. Naturopathic holistic healthcare and preventive care involves simultaneously applying the naturopathic principles, identifying and addressing the cause(s) of symptoms and diseases, developing an integrated treatment plan that applies the healing power of nature, educating a patient about the changes that are recommended to achieve full health while encouraging patients to engage actively in their journey back to health and wellbeing. Naturopathy/naturopathic medicine aligns with the health promotion and disease prevention framework by promoting a healthy lifestyle, assessing risk factors, determining susceptibility to disease, and applying appropriate therapeutic interventions.

Community education is a key activity of the global naturopathic profession with naturopaths/naturopathic doctors utilizing a wide range of patient education tools for changing health behaviours, implementing self-care guidelines, and providing lifestyle recommendations for managing specific diseases [26]. Supporting a patient to develop a healthy lifestyle may include recommendations such as; proper individualized nutrition; adequate exercise and movement; rest, relaxation and stress management; living a moderately paced lifestyle; developing healthy social connections; becoming present to the beauty and complexity of life; avoiding environmental pollutants when possible; and maintaining proper digestion function and elimination [5].

Naturopaths/naturopathic doctors treat patients throughout all life stages of life for both acute and chronic conditions as well as for those seeking preventive and/or palliative care [3]. Naturopathic assessment includes inquiring about environmental exposures and external influences that might be affecting a patient's health, determining the impact of social relationships and community on health, genetic and hereditary factors, and the impact of current and previous medical interventions [1]. Lifestyle behaviours are paramount to disease prevention and health promotion and in preventing minor illnesses from developing into more serious or chronic degenerative diseases [14]. As such, lifestyle behaviours are examined by naturopaths/naturopathic doctors as causative or aggravating factors; as well as being considered as an essential part of the naturopathic treatment intervention.

## Wellness and Wellbeing

Naturopaths/naturopathic doctors focus on supporting

their patients to achieve wellness rather than simply just avoiding or addressing illness. They work with their patients to help each individual experience wellbeing. *Wellness* is often associated with the establishment and maintenance of optimum health and balance, whereas *wellbeing* is based on each person's perspective of their life and is a state inherent and obtainable by everyone, regardless of symptoms or disease(s). The idea of wellbeing is reflected in the World Health Organization's definition of health, that states that health is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity [27, 28]. This is reflected in contemporary international health policy which is increasingly oriented towards achieving a wellness-oriented, rather than illness-oriented, health system [29].

It is not just physical health, but also psychological and spiritual health that creates the state of total wellbeing [1]. The criterion for *wellbeing* varies by individual and may include physical vitality; a strong connection to family and friends; a sense of pride in contributing to one's communities; and the quality of relationships and social connection, financial security and/or passion and love for what one does each day. As part of naturopathic practice, naturopaths/naturopathic doctors inquire as to how a patient defines *wellbeing* for themselves so that they can support their attainment of it. It is the patient's unique concept of *wellbeing* that is the most important as naturopathic care asserts that, when wellbeing is recognized and experienced by an individual, they will heal more quickly than they would if the disease was treated alone in the absence of a more holistic approach [1].

## Summary

Naturopathic practice encompasses two core philosophies (*vitalism* and *holism*) and seven principles including First, Do No Harm (*primum non nocere*), Healing Power of Nature (*vis medicatrix naturae*), Treat the Cause (*tolle causam*), Treat the Whole Person (*tolle totum*), Doctor as Teacher (*docere*), Health Promotion and Disease Prevention and Wellness and Wellbeing. The naturopathic profession is defined by its philosophies and principles which guide all aspect of naturopathic assessment, diagnosis, and treatment. In this way, the naturopathic profession shares characteristics with other complementary medicine professions and is philosophically-oriented to deliver person-centred care [30]. Naturopaths/naturopathic doctors draw on their holistic and vitalistic philosophies to actively and deliberately employ nonspecific factors such as their therapeutic relationship with the patient, empathy and patient empowerment [31]. This approach is just as important to the overall value and benefit of naturopathic care in the community as their use of specific treatments and therapies.

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# 3

## Naturopathic Theories

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### HIGHLIGHTS

- Naturopathic theories guide naturopathic practice and provide an understanding of the clinical reasoning and decision making used in naturopathic care.
- *Naturopathic Therapeutic Order* provides a graduated guide to applying naturopathic practices, therapies, and services.
- *Emunctory Theory* outlines the need to and process of eliminating toxins to achieve health.
- *Theory of Complex Systems* acknowledges the human body as a complex adaptive system and provides a framework for understanding the interconnectedness of human health.

The practice of naturopathy/naturopathic medicine has always been and continues to be structured around philosophies, principles, and theories. As the naturopathic profession has developed, theories have been amalgamated, codified, and expanded to incorporate scientific advancements that explain the theories further.

## Naturopathic Theories

According to the 2016 WNF global survey of naturopathic educational institutions, several naturopathic theories were reported as being common to the practice of naturopathy/naturopathic medicine globally (see Figure 3.1) [1].

Many of the naturopathic theories that have been taught in naturopathic educational programs have been incorporated into the naturopathic philosophies and principles outlined in Chapter 2. Some theories such as the Naturopathic Therapeutic Order, Emunctory Theory and Theory of Complex Systems are distinct and are highlighted below.

## Naturopathic Therapeutic Order

The naturopathic therapeutic order expands the process of healing of the *vis medicatrix naturae* by emphasizing that the causal factors of disease and the determinants of health are the primary basis for the maintenance and restoration of vitality and healing [2]. Guidelines from early naturopathic theories were codified in 1997 in the United

States with support from the naturopathic colleges in North America and Australia [3] into the Naturopathic Therapeutic Order to provide a guide outlining the order in which naturopathic practices, therapies and treatments are best applied to provide the greatest benefit with the least potential for risk or harm to the patient. This theory explains a natural hierarchy of therapeutic intervention, based on observations of the natural healing processes, and is based on the understanding that the body possesses an intrinsic nature to heal itself using the least possible force.

Naturopaths/naturopathic doctors appreciate and incorporate a range of treatments across the therapeutic spectrum. Whilst naturopathic practice focuses on the effective prioritization of non-invasive or non-pharmacological interventions, naturopathic philosophy also recognizes that more forceful treatments, whether provided by a naturopath/naturopathic doctor or another health professional, will be required in some circumstances.

According to the naturopathic therapeutic order [2, 4], treatment recommendations, especially for chronic conditions, are best undertaken through the following graduated steps, some of which may require referral to another healthcare professional.

1. **Establish the conditions for health** by promoting a healthy lifestyle and removing obstacles to health and healing.
2. **Stimulate the *vis medicatrix naturae* and self-healing processes** by applying naturopathic therapies and practices such as nutrition, hydrotherapy, homeopathy and acupuncture, or other

gentle naturopathic modalities as offered in each jurisdiction.

3. **Support and balance physiologic and bioenergetic systems** by strengthening weakened and calming overstimulated systems, tissues, and organs with the use of herbal medicines, nutraceuticals and other naturopathic therapies and practices.
4. **Address or correct structural integrity** by using naturopathic manipulation, postural correction, exercise therapy and other forms of bodywork or manual physical therapies.
5. **Address pathology using specific natural substances or modalities** by employing natural substances to treat, restore and regenerate the body, as needed.
6. **Address pathology using pharmaceutical or synthetic medicines** to halt the progression of the disease, when needed. In many jurisdictions this step requires referral to an allied health professional.
7. **Suppress or surgically remove pathology** by referring and supporting invasive modalities, surgery, radiation, chemotherapy, prescription medications, etc., as needed.

Naturopathic practitioners use supportive therapies described in levels 1 to 5 to concurrently decrease side effects and support recovery when more invasive treatments are required [3].

## Emunctory Theory

Toxic substances can be absorbed from the environment or produced by normal and/or abnormal metabolism. The theory of emunctories outlines that to maintain or achieve health, toxic substances that are stored in the body must be eliminated. The idea that toxins within the body are a cause of illness was reinforced by the work of

Christoph Wilhelm Hufeland [5], Samuel Thomson [6], Johann Schroth [7], Vincent Priessnitz [8], Louis Kuhne [9], John Henry Tilden [10] and other significant naturopathic practitioners [11].

Emunctory Theory expands upon the naturopathic principle *tolle causam* and facilitates the *vis medicatrix naturae* [4]. It states that proper elimination of toxins is essential to overall health, especially for chronic disease. Elimination of toxins assists vitality and innate healing and its corollary – the lack of elimination blocks vitality and healing. The Emunctory Theory recognizes that the body has several pathways to support the elimination of toxins. The primary emunctory pathways include the lungs (breath), kidneys (urine), bowels (stool), skin (sweat), reproductive organs (menstrual flow and ejaculation) and larynx (voice) [4]. Secondary emunctory pathways include other ways that the body excretes toxins such as nasal discharge, eye discharge, skin eruptions, etc. [4].

In recent years, modern naturopathic doctors have integrated knowledge from traditional emunctory theory and modern research to form a new discipline, called Emunctorology [12]. Emunctorology is a synthesis of traditional naturopathic practice and modern science and provides a multisystem construct allowing for the following: [4, 12].

- The integrated study of the organs of elimination (the emunctories).
- The understanding of genetic susceptibility to emunctory dysfunctions.
- The functional relationships and the role they play in maintaining normal physiology (homeostasis) through the elimination of waste material and toxic substances.
- The pathophysiology that occurs if the emunctories

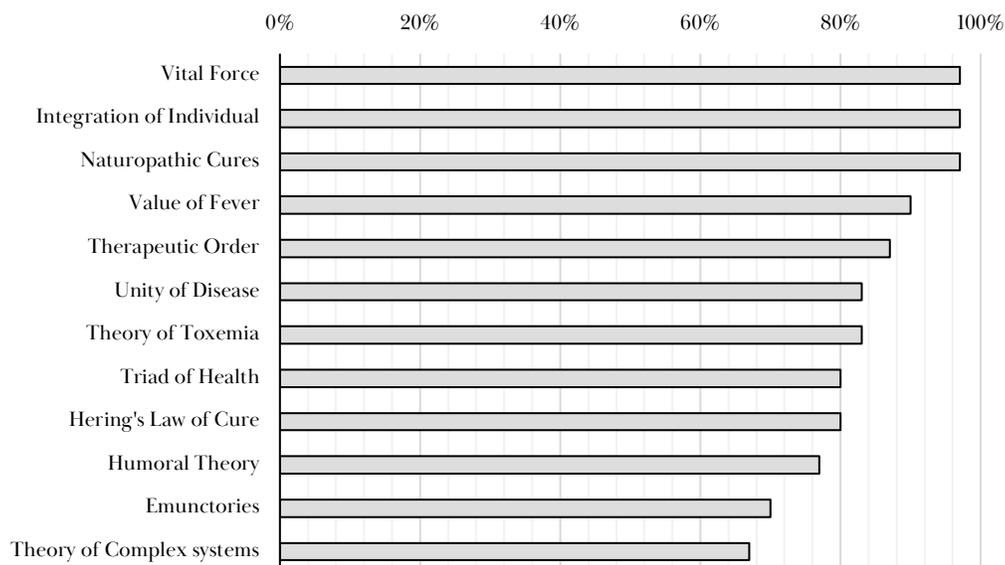


Figure 3.1: Proportion of naturopathic philosophies and theories taught by naturopathic educational programs

function sub-optimally or are diseased.

- The clinical strategies used in naturopathic practice to treat, nourish, tonify, stimulate and/or sedate the emunctories in the maintenance of good health.

In part, naturopathic assessment involves determining the functioning of the emunctory pathways. A clean, healthy diet and adequate water are essential, but treatment also aims to activate and normalize the functioning of all emunctory pathways. There are several naturopathic practices and therapeutic modalities that can be employed to assist with emunctory function including the application of nutritional foods, proper hydration, herbal medicine, hydrotherapy, tissue salts, cupping, increasing sweating, movement exercises and/or lymphatic drainage [4].

## Theory of Complex Systems

The human body is a complex adaptive system. It is also a self-sustaining system functioning within an environment of multiple nested systems, which are dynamic, evolving, and characterized by emergence, interactive causation, and elaborate interconnectedness between internal and external factors [13]. Naturopathy/naturopathic medicine has always embraced the understanding that a person is an integrated whole that interacts and reacts to their surroundings. Although the importance of embracing complexity in a formalized and systematic way, such as through systems thinking and complexity theory, is being increasingly acknowledged [14], healthcare professions such as naturopathy/naturopathic medicine that are philosophically holistic and complex in nature have always conceptualized health and healing in a manner consistent with this paradigm [15]. Naturopathy/naturopathic medicine views a person's individual health needs

as a configuration of interacting, interdependent parts connected through a web of relationships that form a whole greater than the sum of its parts, and in doing so is often able to target several areas of treatment simultaneously. In practice, the theory of complex systems is mirrored in the naturopathic approach to health and disease in the following ways:

- Embracing *holism* (a naturopathic philosophy) versus reductionism.
- Recognizing that the relationships between all aspects of an individual and between an individual and their environment are more important than the isolated parts (naturopathic principle *Treat the Whole Person*).
- Viewing individuals as complex rather than complicated and recognizing that individuals display different properties such as *emergent* and *non-linear* patterns rather than linear cause-and-effect mechanisms (naturopathic principle *treat the cause*).

Through their philosophical and principles-based approach to person-centered care, naturopaths and naturopathic doctors readily embrace concepts of complex systems theory in practice. Their multi-system approach to assessment, diagnosis and treatment highlights the importance of considering multiple organs and bodily systems in all aspects of healthcare [16].

## Summary

Naturopathic practice is supported by theories such as the Naturopathic Therapeutic Order, the Emunctory Theory, and the Theory of Complex systems. Together the naturopathic philosophies, principles and theories guide naturopathic care and describe a theoretical basis to health and disease.

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