



## AANP RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY STATEMENT

The American Association of Naturopathic Physicians (AANP) calls for a reengineering of our health care system to incorporate sustainable wellness programs that address the underlying causal factors associated with chronic disease. Without a significant shift away from the current disease management approach, any proposed reimbursement model is destined for failure, placing the future health and the safety of generations to come in severe jeopardy.

The AANP believes that clearly defined wellness and prevention programs promoting lifestyle changes can diminish the incidence and severity of chronic disease, provide a substantial return on investment, and reduce reliance on the conventional medical care system. The underlying philosophy of naturopathic medicine is rooted in the belief that patient-centered care facilitates the inherent ability of the human body to maintain and restore optimal health. Redefining our cultural standard of health requires integration of wellness and prevention strategies that address the nutritional, psychological, physical, social, spiritual and financial needs of the individual person. By doing so, we can successfully engage consumers in a therapeutic order of care that starts with the least invasive measures, including eliminating barriers to health and stimulating one's immune system, and moves in a logical manner towards more invasive treatments such as pharmaceuticals and surgery. Thus, we reduce the need and frequency of more expensive and higher risk procedures in the near- and long-term.

The increase in usage of what has been known as "CAM" or complementary and alternative medicine, expresses what the general public is seeking in a health care system. Seventy-five percent of Americans have tried some form of CAM, previously considered as alternative, while 38% of Americans use these services on a regular basis. It is our position that these services are no longer alternative and must be integrated into the fabric of all future health care offerings.

Naturopathic doctors are highly qualified physicians, providing a continuum of care from wellness to disease care, who help patients own their own health and provide a credible consumer choice for optimal health. Naturopathic medicine is an effective consumer choice for chronic disease management.

- We support systemic implementation of a clearly defined wellness and prevention approach that is patient focused and personalized for all health care offerings.
- We support recognition of, and access to naturopathic medicine, all other regulated services and the providers who support these true wellness and prevention programs, and continued access to quality natural products.
- We support inclusion of these services and providers in pilots for underserved areas, federally funded programs for veterans and active duty personnel and their families, and programs for children and families in schools.

- We specifically request that naturopathic physicians and naturopathic medical schools be included in programs for expansion of secure Electronic Medical Record programs to demonstrate the cost-effective, outcomes-based improvement in the activities of daily living our physicians provide their patients.
  - We support the development and implementation of policies that recognize the entirety of human health and its relation to environment, including the need for clean air, water and whole foods.
- 

## PATIENT AS PRACTITIONER

Patients of naturopathic doctors and consumers across the country are taking charge of their personal health needs and implementing healthy care strategies in growing numbers as is born out by the following statistics:

- 74% of those with Internet access use the web as a primary source of information for health care. <sup>1</sup>
- In the United States, approximately 38 percent of adults (about 4 in 10) and approximately 12 percent of children regularly utilize “Complementary and Alternative Medicine, or CAM. <sup>2</sup>

The use of supplements, acupuncture, and naturopathic medicine is no longer considered alternative. With limited exceptions however, it is not valued by the economics model of our current system and therefore access to coaching and care that will result in healthier outcomes for families and for the country is limited. In order to meet the expressed needs of patients it is essential that we move to an integrated model of health care delivery that is patient centered and utilizes the power of natural medicine.

Naturopathic physicians across the country interface on a daily basis with their allopathic colleagues, ensuring their patients receive the best care possible. The number of integrative practices continues to grow, and increasingly providers of naturopathic medicine are called upon to share their expertise in the conventional medical community. This systemic trend to provide integrative care for the entire spectrum of prevention to disease care must be fostered and stand as a centerpiece for the expansion of electronic medical record technology. Doing so will enable development of outcomes-based programs, without which we will find ourselves measuring the outcomes of the current status quo. In addition, utilization of EMR in naturopathic medical schools will ensure

---

<sup>1</sup> **Family Medicine Patients’ Use of the Internet for Health Information: A MetroNet Study** Kendra L. Schwartz, MD, MSPH, Thomas Roe, MD, Justin Northrup, MPT, James Meza, MD, Raouf Seifeldin, MD and Anne Victoria Neale, PhD, MPH *The Journal of the American Board of Family Medicine* **19:39-45 (2006)**

<sup>2</sup> Barnes PM, Bloom B, Nahin R. *CDC National Health Statistics Report #12. Complementary and Alternative Medicine Use Among Adults and Children: United States, 2007.* December 2008.

future generations of practitioners will be trained with an embodied understanding of what constitutes measurable, quality, outcomes-based care.

## PREVENTION AND WELLNESS

Current practice and terminology severely limits what is considered prevention and wellness for the purpose of reimbursement. Disease screening, vaccinations and other prevention strategies including drug therapy, fail to empower the patient or enable patient choice to engage in health promotion and disease prevention behaviors. Naturopathic physicians are trained in the basic medical sciences and conventional diagnostics, and are also trained in therapeutic nutrition, botanical medicine, homeopathy, natural childbirth, classical Chinese medicine, hydrotherapy, naturopathic manipulative therapy, pharmacology and minor surgery. Naturopathic doctors are positioned to practice preventive health care, engaging patients in health promotion and in treating those with chronic disease to manage the entirety of their health. Naturopathic physicians have practiced expertise in individualizing health promotion and fostering patients' adherence to lifestyle-based health promotion behaviors.

Redefining our cultural standard of health requires integration of wellness and prevention strategies that address the nutritional, psychological, physical, social, spiritual and financial needs of the individual person. Stress related illness accounts for 25-40% of all illness, yet proven strategies for reducing stress including yoga, meditation and nutritional supplementation are not valued in the current health care system. As a result, we reward practitioners and payors for the most invasive and most expensive treatment strategies.

The naturopathic medical therapeutic order, articulated below, is the basic approach taken by naturopathic physicians to guide patients to wellness, beginning with the least force and moving to more invasive means as necessary. It stands as an example of how to integrate prevention strategies into our current treatment paradigm.

1. Re-establish the basis for health, removing obstacles to cure by establishing a healthy regimen.
2. Stimulate the body's inherent ability to maintain and restore optimal health using various modalities and systems of health-botanicals, homeopathy, nutrition, hydrotherapy, touch, counseling, and Chinese medicine.
3. Support weakened systems using modalities to strengthen the immune system, decrease inflammation, optimize metabolic functioning, balance regulatory systems, enhance regeneration, and increase vitality.
4. Correct structural integrity, correcting physical imbalances by use of exercise, manipulation, massage, and targeted nutrition.
5. Prescribe specific natural substances for pathology including vitamins, minerals, herbs, diet, breathing techniques, hydrotherapies to target specific disease progression.
6. Prescribe pharmaceutical intervention to halt and palliate disease process.
7. Recommend surgery, suppressive measures, radiation, and chemotherapy.

## RECOMMENDED PLAN OF ACTION

1. Redefine primary care. Conventional medicine and current reimbursement methodology does not value, or in many cases even recognize, the work of regulated professions that specifically empower patients to own their own health status. Wellness and prevention must be clearly defined. A new category of provider must be designated that embraces naturopathic physicians, and all other regulated providers who provide services that guide patients to natural and lesser invasive therapies. This will reduce dependence on high-cost, high-risk procedures and substances. The new system must also value innovation and diversity, remaining open to continued growth and experience.
2. Implementation of pilot programs. In order to effectively implement this new paradigm, we recommend that the following programs be targeted for implementation of health and wellness programs that utilize the services of naturopathic doctors and other practitioners in the newly defined prevention category:
  - Department of Defense active duty and family. The lack of readiness of our current and future armed services due to obesity and poor health status currently presents a security risk to the United States.
  - Veterans and returning National Guardsman (who lack the systemic health care services of the Department of Veterans Affairs), can benefit significantly from the services of naturopathic physicians, particularly in the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic head injuries and the health consequences of environmental toxic exposures.
  - Underserved populations, including Native American and Alaskan Native populations, and those living in rural areas. These populations have endemic rates of diabetes and substance abuse, both of which are amendable to a lifestyle based program of health optimization.
  - Children, families and educators in our nation's schools who can serve as the next generation of healthy Americans.
3. Expansion of electronic medical records to include naturopathic physicians and naturopathic medical schools. Without expansion of the EMR to those providers and institutions who are traditionally outside the convention system, the Administration will find itself successfully monitoring the failing processes that the current system mandates. Expansion of the EMR to integrative and innovative medicine will allow for articulation of how performance-based outcomes can be measured by documenting improvement in the activities of daily living. Inclusion of naturopathic medical schools will serve as the foundation of teaching future generations of doctors the value of outcomes standards.
4. Public policy development and implementation that recognizes the entirety of human health and its relation to environment. The health status of any human community is not limited to a diagnosis or treatment. Rather, diet, exercise

habits, individual health history and family health history, are also impacted by the air, water and quality of foods consumed. We support development of policy that acknowledges this relational aspect of health.

---

The AANP is the only national professional organization representing licensed Doctors of Naturopathy in the United States. Licensed naturopathic doctors attend four-year, residential graduate programs at seven schools across North America, all of whom are accredited or are candidates for accreditation by the Council for Naturopathic Medical Education, as authorized by the U.S. Department of Education.