

Naturopathic Medicine Works: Disease Prevention and Health Improvement



Improved Medical Outcomes

Several clinical trials have demonstrated how naturopathic care produces health improvement and risk factor reduction:

- **Menopausal symptoms:** patients smoked less and exercised more. These patients were *seven times* more likely to report improvement in insomnia and increased energy.¹
- **Anxiety:** improvements in anxiety, fatigue, and quality-of-life.²
- **Low Back Pain:** less pain, more weight loss, less days off work.³
- **Heart Disease:** fewer medications, better blood pressure and cholesterol, better mood.⁴
- **Diabetes:** improvements in blood sugar, mood, and self-care.⁵
- **Multiple Cardiovascular risk factors:** Reduction in hypertension, high cholesterol, obesity, smoking, inactivity and excessive stress.⁶

Improved Community Health Outcomes

- Patients receiving CAM services were significantly more likely to have obtained commonly used preventive services, including blood pressure and cholesterol testing, complete physical exams, and breast cancer screening.⁷

Improved Patient Satisfaction

- Patient satisfaction with services: 92% CAM vs. 44% conventional services.⁸
- Bastyr Center for Natural Health – the teaching clinic of the naturopathic medical school in Seattle –ranked in the top 3 among 46 Seattle-area primary care clinics for overall patient satisfaction.⁹

Naturopathic Medicine Saves Money

Naturopathic Care Reduces the Need for More Costly Conventional Medical Care

- 55% of CAM users report a slight to substantial reduction of their use of conventional medical care.⁸
- 61% of CAM users report a slight to substantial reduction in their use of prescription drugs.⁸
- The Diabetes Prevention Trial demonstrated that diet and lifestyle treatments to prevent type 2 diabetes were more effective (and cost effective) than early drug therapy in high-risk patients.¹⁰
- Williamson et al. recently recommended increased incorporation of diet and lifestyle therapy into the health system in their review of health policy for diabetes prevention.¹¹
- Blue Shield's internal study found that a naturopathic-centered managed care program could cut the costs of chronic and stress related illness by up to 40%, and lower costs of specialist utilization by 30%.¹²
- Naturopathic care to treat diabetics led to improvements in blood sugar, mood, and patient self-care.⁵

Naturopathic Care Reduces Employee Sick Days and Cost, while Improving Productivity

- Employees of the Canadian Postal Service receiving naturopathic care for low back pain or heart disease showed reductions in lost work days and improvements in productivity while at work.^{4,13}
- These improvements in workplace productivity made naturopathic medicine a cost-savings approach. Adding naturopathic care for employees showed a clear return-on-investment.
- Vermont Auto Dealers Association use of naturopathic care for employees saved \$2.10 in

medical costs for every dollar spent, and \$8.20 in total costs per employee for every dollar spent.

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Naturopathic Medicine is Not an “Add-on,” but Primary Care

- 67.7% patients in Washington State who receive Naturopathic care do not receive concurrent care from an MD/DO for their reason for visit.¹⁴
- A 2004 analysis of payers found that in Washington State, CAM services cost approximately \$0.20-\$0.19 per member per month in HMO and PPO plans respectively.¹⁵
- A 2006 analysis attempting to quantify the impact of the WA State “Every Category of Provider” law found that the impact on insurance premiums was “modest,” representing about 2.9% of total expenditures.¹⁶
- According to Lafferty et al. in 2004, approximately 7.6% of cancer patient records sampled had claims for naturopathic services amounting to <2% of overall medical bills for cancer care for over 7,000 patients. The average amount billed per cancer patient for naturopathic services was \$413.00; the average amount billed for conventional care for the same patients was \$40,728.¹⁷

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