Our country is in crisis regarding this disease because, quite simply, diabetes is at epidemic levels in the United States.

Diabetes seems to be occurring to everyone—most people know a friend or family member who has developed it. And the statistics of diabetes are devastating—over the next 24 hours, 2200 people will be diagnosed with diabetes, 512 diabetics will die, 66 diabetics will go blind, 77 diabetics will be diagnosed with end-stage renal disease, and 153 diabetics will require an amputation.

24 million Americans are diagnosed with diabetes, and 47 million Americans with “prediabetes.” In fact, the Centers for Disease Control state that if things don’t change, one out of every three born today will become a diabetic, and that half of all Americans will be a diabetic by 2050.

There are several types of diabetes: gestational, whereby a woman becomes diabetic during her pregnancy; Type 1, which occurs both in children and adults due to an auto-immune disease destroying cells in the pancreas; and, Type 2, which is the most common form, occurring in 90-95% of diabetic patients, including pediatric patients. Type 2 diabetes is related to insulin resistance, which means the pancreas is producing insulin but the body cells are no longer sensitive to it, so glucose levels in their blood stay high.

Type 2 diabetes is caused by a number of factors, most of them controllable. There is a genetic association with diabetes, which people cannot change, but if everyone kept the controllable factors well-managed, we still would not be seeing the preponderance of diabetics. The controllable factors include: poor diet, over-eating, nutritional deficiencies, high refined grains
and sugars consumption, high saturated fat consumption, lack of exercise, and being overweight/obese. Environmental toxins and hormonal imbalances are also noted for initiating insulin resistance. In the comprehensive visits with patients in which naturopathic physicians specialize, naturopathic physicians will investigate all of these "Obstacles to Cure" to uncover which aspects need to be specifically addressed per individual patient. In most patients many, if not most, of all of the etiologic factors are involved.

The naturopathic physician will then do a thorough physical exam, including basic evaluations as well as those specifically associated with diabetes, like checking the feet for nerve damage. Doctors will do the standard lab tests, checking for cholesterol, liver and kidney function, anemia, and all the blood sugar monitoring labs. Doctors may also do tests to measure vitamin D (necessary for glucose regulation), inflammatory markers, and cardiac risk profiles, including checking for environmental toxemia and thyroid, adrenal, and reproductive hormonal imbalances.

Diabetic patients need to welcome many changes into their lives, and naturopathic physicians are excellent at instructing and supporting them in this process. Diabetic patients will need to change their food intake to a low carbohydrate diet, and be taught how to get good protein variety in their diet, what kinds of oils are healthful, and how to include vegetables and a little fruit in their dietary regimen. Patients are encouraged to get an hour of exercise five days a week, and are taught methods to help regulate their stress, if that is a factor in their glucose control.

Patients will be given various supplements, which are invaluable. They work synergistically with the other aspects of the comprehensive protocol to replace deficient nutrients; help lower their glucose levels and decrease their insulin resistance; reduce inflammation, lipids and blood pressure; and protect them from diabetic induced damage. Patients may at times need to continue on standard prescriptive medication, may need to start medications or commonly, due to naturopathic care, may be able to reduce or stop medications. The naturopathic physician will effectively monitor the need for medication and make appropriate suggestions about the need for their use.

All in all, naturopathic protocols for diabetes are detailed, safe, and responsible. Patients can lose weight, gain significant energy, and reduce their glucose numbers, lipid values, and blood pressure. They can at times see their damaged nerves and kidneys to recover full functioning, and those without such damage will have protection from developing it. Naturopathic treatment of diabetes can be incredibly effective and naturopathic physicians should be the first type of doctor a diabetic patient seeks out for long term care.