

Lawmakers Agree: Naturopathic Doctors are a Solid Choice to Combat Chronic Pain for Veterans

It's a fact, many patients now prefer to use integrative health care approaches, especially to treat chronic pain. This trend has given licensed Naturopathic Doctors (NDs) even greater leverage to push for veterans and others who suffer from chronic pain to have access to the full range of treatments – and physicians.

Members of Congress have made clear their interest in licensed NDs becoming employed by the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). It won't be long. The [American Association of Naturopathic Physicians](#) is working to clarify the role NDs would play within the VHA. The Agency's Office of Patient Centered Care is taking the lead, as the bridge between conventional doctors and more holistic practitioners.

Check the stats: according to a 2015 national survey, 64 percent of veterans would prefer their doctor prescribe natural therapies before drugs or surgery – and 73 percent would consider seeing a ND if staffed at the VHA.¹ Moreover, the focus on disease prevention provided by naturopathic care – especially in chronic and stress related illnesses – has been found to reduce the cost of seeing a specialist by 30 percent.

If the VHA were to employ licensed NDs tomorrow, here are the majority benefits:

- Increase access to primary care physicians
- Reduce costs for the VHA through a greater focus on illness prevention
- Reduce primary care out-of-pocket expenses for veterans
- Lessen use of prescription drugs by relying on natural modalities
- Improve patient outcomes and quality of life

Chronic pain can often result in opioid addiction and depression – both of which are major problems in the U.S., especially for veterans. Naturopathic Doctors are poised to help.

There are over 5,000 licensed NDs in the U.S., who are well trained in natural, non-invasive, non-toxic approaches to health. Their orientation is on finding the underlying cause of a condition and not medicating the symptoms.

1. Pournadeali, K.; et al. (May 2016). Serving Veterans within the VHA: A Role for Naturopathic Physician. Retrieved from <http://www.naturopathic.org/nds%20in%20the%20va>