



The Impact of the PPACA on Patient Access to Naturopathic Physicians

The first section of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) includes these concepts:

- Quality Affordable Health Care for All Americans
- Immediate Improvements in Health Care coverage for all Americans

A major goal of PPACA is to improve the health care system for Americans by increasing the affordability of health care, making it more accessible, and improving its effectiveness. The ultimate goal is a healthier American people.

Naturopathic Physicians are in a unique position to accomplish the goals of the PPACA by virtue of their broad scope of practice, their holistic approach to health and the emphasis on prevention and wellness. But many sectors of our health care system are not familiar with what Naturopathic Physicians offer their patients the fact that many NDs function as PCPs. One goal of AANP is to educate policymakers in D.C. about the important contribution of ND's are able to make to our health care system.

Granting access to naturopathic patients

Section 2706 of the PPACA is the "anti-discrimination" provision. The effective date is January 2014. Here is the language:

A group health plan and a health insurance issuer offering group or individual health insurance coverage shall not discriminate with respect to participation under the plan or coverage against any health care provider who is acting within the scope of that provider's license or certification under applicable State law. This section shall not require that a group health plan or health insurance issuer contract with any health care provider willing to abide by the terms and conditions for participation established by the plan or issuer. Nothing in this section shall be construed as preventing a group health plan, a health insurance issuer, or the Secretary from establishing varying reimbursement rates based on quality or performance measures.

Facts about implementation of the "anti-discrimination" provision

Agency oversight:

- Health and Human Services (general implementation and rule writing)
- Department of Labor (self-insured plans)
- Department of Treasury (tax consequences)

Messages about implementation and the role of ND's in the health care system

- ND's are a physician level workforce, licensed in sixteen states; and there are four-year federally accredited medical schools in five states.
- ND's are the fastest growing full scope medical profession, currently graduating nearly 500 primary care physicians, annually.
- It is important for members of Congress to reaffirm a commitment to patient access to Naturopathic Physicians under section 2706. This commitment must be solid no matter what impact a Supreme Court decision has on the PPACA.