

THE BENEFITS OF INCREASING CONSUMER ACCESS TO NATUROPATHIC DOCTORS

Action needed by OHPB

1. Write specific language in draft proposals to legislature defining PCPs as including NDs
2. Guard against professional discrimination in order to address the primary care shortfall



Who are Naturopathic Doctors?

- Primary care providers
- Specialize in the prevention of illness, as well as the management of chronic disease
- Trained in both natural and conventional medicine
- Use conventional diagnostics and standards to diagnose illnesses and health conditions
- Use a variety of natural medicines including diet and nutrient therapies, counseling, and botanical medicine; as well as prescription medications, scheduled drugs, and other appropriate therapeutics.

ND Education

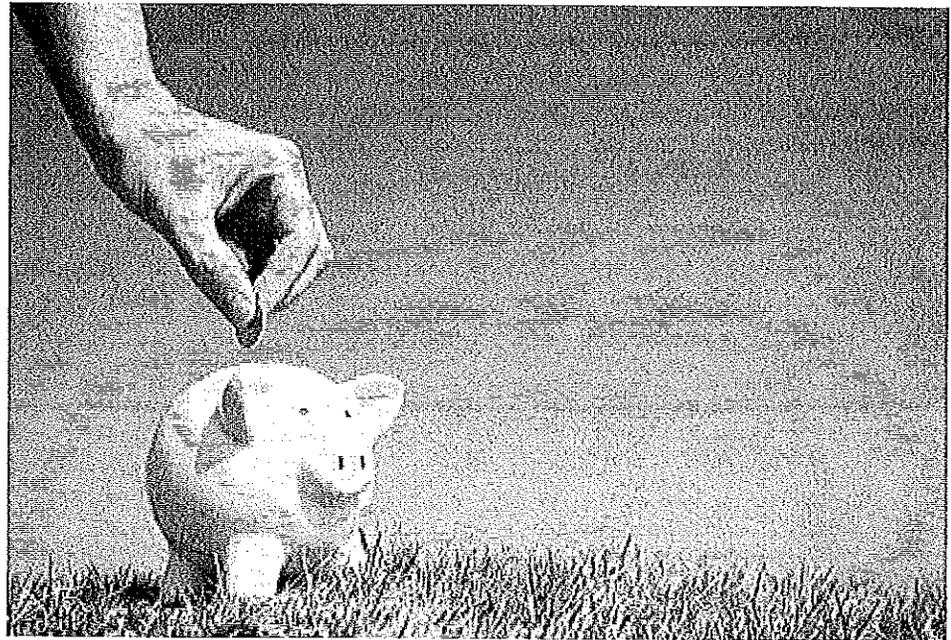
- Attend a 4 year accredited graduate level naturopathic medical school
 - Both the U.S. Department of Education and the Carnegie Institute classify the ND degree as a First-Professional Degree under Doctorate-Professional (Clinical), on par with MD and DO
 - Council of Naturopathic Medical Education (CNME) is a programmatic accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education
- Required to pass National Licensing Exam
 - Naturopathic Physicians Licensing Examination (NPLEX)
 - Basic Sciences and Clinical Boards

Oregon NDs are licensed to:

- Diagnose, prevent, and treat disease
- Perform physical exams including orificial exams (oral, vaginal, anal)
- Order x-rays, electrocardiograms, ultrasound, CT, and laboratory tests
- Draw blood and perform CLIA-waved lab tests in-office
- Perform minor surgery
- Deliver babies (with additional certification)
- Provide injections including vaccinations and IV medications
- Prescribe all natural & pharmaceutical medications needed in a primary care setting
- Are eligible for Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) numbers, giving them the right to prescribe controlled medications

Oregon has a vested interest in covering Naturopathic Doctors

- Cost-Effective
- A solution to Primary Care Shortage
- Community Demand



NDs Prevent Chronic Disease and Decrease Health Costs

- Naturopathic Doctors are the only PCP's trained extensively in counseling, nutrition, exercise prescriptions, and stress management to specifically address the prevention and early intervention of chronic diseases
- In Oregon, Naturopathic Medicaid Services were 57.5% more cost-effective than MD/DO/NP combined services when studied in 1991.¹
- In Washington, naturopathic care showed up to 40% reduced cost for chronic and stress related illness, as well as 30% cut in specialist utilization².

1. The Cost Effectiveness of Naturopathic Delivery of Oregon Medicaid Services Statistics provided by Leslie Hendrickson, Office of Medical Assistance. Feb 11, 1991

2. Henry. 1995. King County Medical Blue Shield Phase 1 Final Report: Alternative Healthcare Project Steering Committee. August 5, 1995.

Evidence of Cost-Savings Washington

“With respect to naturopathy...59% of [users] reported decreased visits to [MD] primary care physicians, and about 48% reported decreased visits to specialists. And then another major driver of health care costs, over 50% reported decreased use of prescription medications.”-

Laura Patton, MD, Medical Director of Alternative Services at Group Health Cooperative, Washington State in testimony before the Vermont House Health Committee, March 3, 2005

Evidence of Cost-Savings Ontario¹

In a 2011 survey of Ontarians who use naturopathic doctors:

- 28% report use of prescription medicine was significantly or noticeably reduced
- 19% report reduced visits to the hospital
- 18% report reduced use of expensive medical specialists

The survey also found:

- 57% of Ontarians believe naturopathic medicine is leading to better health outcomes for those who use it

1. Attitudes Toward Naturopathic Medicine. Innovative Research Group. September 1, 2011. www.innovativeresearch.ca, http://www.cnm.edu/ontarians_say

Evidence of Cost-Savings Vermont¹

- VADA (Vermont Auto Dealer's Association) wellness program administered by NDs:
 - saved nearly \$1.5 million in medical costs the first year they made Naturopathic Medicine available to its members.
 - Saved \$1,800 per employee.
 - **Produced a return on investment of \$21 for every \$1 spent in direct & indirect costs.**
 - Only 0.2% increase in per member claims costs (2005) compared to national average of 7%.
 - Each VADA-identified **health risk** showed **improvement** over two years (chart).



Risk	Reduction
Hypertension	36%
Cardiovascular risks	35%
High cholesterol	16%
Physical inactivity	21%
Smoking	17%
Excessive stress	25%

1. Vermont Automobile Dealer's Association and Green Mountain Wellness Solutions <http://www.greenmountainwellness.com/> ; <http://www.vermontada.org/wellness.asp>

Coverage of ND's does not lead to runaway utilization

- 67.7% of patients in WA State who receive Naturopathic care do not receive concurrent care from an MD/DO for their RFV (reason for visit); Naturopathic care is not “add-on” medical care in most cases.¹

1. Cherkin DC, Deyo RA, Sherman KJ et al. Characteristics of visits to licensed acupuncturists, chiropractors, massage therapists, and naturopathic physicians. J Am Board Fam Pract. 2002;15:463-472.

Why Are We Here?

- ND's offer cost-effective ways of preventing and managing chronic disease
- MCO's almost categorically refuse to credential NDs or cover naturopathic services for services that are identical to those administered by an MD, DO, NP, or PA.
- Oregon has a pool of trained PCP's that are dramatically underutilized - in large part because of insurance policies that are out-of-step with market demands and needs.

MCO barriers

- The OHA is prohibited from discriminating against NDs (ORS 685.055). Patients with an Open Card (administered directly by DMAP) may see an ND as a PCP
- However, MCOs almost categorically refuse to credential NDs. ORS 685.055 breaks down in contracts between OHA & MCOs
- One MCO informed an ND who wanted to see OHP patients that their leadership philosophically opposes naturopathic medicine and would not accept NDs
- Another MCO stated they are “physician owned” and only credential MDs/DO’s and their ancillary providers (NPs/PAs) and do not see consumer demand as sufficient to indicate NDs should be on the panel.

Insurance barriers

- Private market insurance coverage of naturopathic doctors is all over the map
- Many private policies create barriers to care and drive up costs, including policies that:
 - Refuse to cover prescriptions or vaccinations from NDs.
 - Refuse to cover labs or diagnostic images ordered by NDs.
 - Place arbitrary annual caps – often \$1,500 or less – on services rendered by an ND. Sometimes labs and diagnostic images are applied toward this cap.
- *These policies force many to duplicate their office visit to an MD, DO, or NP to get the same test, prescription or lab ordered and drives up healthcare costs*

Insurance barriers impeding practice

- Some insurers withhold the basic tools that help doctors diagnose and treat.
- Even though it's in our legal scope of practice, some insurers will not cover gyn exams, pap smears, urinary analysis or injections and sometimes physicals performed by an ND
- Patients who choose an ND for primary care may be faced with a decision to not have certain preventive services or tests done because their insurer will only cover it when performed by an MD/DO/NP.

Community Demand



- Every public meeting conducted by OHA for comments on transformation included demand to include naturopathic care.
- Every public meeting conducted by OHA in 2010 for comments on health insurance exchange included demand to include naturopathic care.¹

1. "Oregon Health Authority and Oregon Health Policy Board September 2010 Community Meetings," Submitted by Oregon Consensus, Portland State University, 10/4/10.

Consequences of inaction

Without specific intent by OHPB to fix this problem in statute, OHPB will:

- allow a glaring circumvention of ORS 685.055
- turn away a trained pool of PCPs at a time of desperate need
- continue system inefficiencies
- undermine the Triple Aim goals of focusing on prevention and cost-savings
- ignore community demand

What are we asking for?

- In order to improve patient access to high quality primary health care, naturopathic doctors seek credentialing and parity in coverage under Oregon health insurance programs
- No new or additional services
- Coverage of the SAME services that are provided, regardless of whether provided by naturopathic doctors, medical doctors, osteopathic doctors, nurse practitioners and physician's assistants

Conclusion

- The patients of naturopathic doctors need the OHPB to include language in the draft CCO transformation bill that allows credentialing of NDs on a par with other primary care practitioners such as MDs, DOs, and NPs. Without specific language, we will just have status quo with the marketplace lagging light-years behind scope, license, and consumer demand.
- Benefits to both the consumer and insurers include:
 - Cost-savings solution to astronomical chronic health care costs
 - ND's focus on prevention and lifestyle modification
 - Decreased ER cost and specialists visits
 - A solution to Oregon's PCP shortage: increasing accessibility
 - Response to community demand