

An Introduction
to Naturopathy
and
Naturopathic
Medicine

by Ronald Steriti, NMD, PhD

About this booklet

This booklet is written as a brief introduction to naturopathy and naturopathic medicine for people to be more informed about what these fields have to offer, and for clients of naturopaths to be better able to understand naturopathy and how best to use the services of their naturopath.

About the Author

Dr. Ronald Steriti, NMD, PhD is a graduate of Southwest College of Naturopathic Medicine and a member of the American Association of Naturopathic Physicians.

Dr. Steriti advocates freedom of choice in health care and assists people in making informed decisions about natural health throughout the United States and Canada.

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Ronald Steriti, NMD, PhD

655 1st Ave. North
Naples, Florida 34102
(941) 659-2684

<http://www.naturdoctor.com>
ron@naturdoctor.com

Naturopathy

What is Naturopathy?

In 1902 Benedict Lust opened the American School of Naturopathy in New York. He names his store the first “Health Food Store.”

Naturopathy is a system of medicine that emphasizes using natural healing methods. This includes the therapeutic use of herbs, homeopathy, hydrotherapy, nutrition, diet, and manipulation.

The principles underlying the practice of naturopathy include: The healing power of nature, Identify and treat the cause, First do no harm, Doctor as teacher, and Prevention.

According to Lust, the program of naturopathic cure has three main components:

1. The elimination of evil habits such as overeating, consuming alcoholic drinks, drugs, coffee, or meat, excessive worry, etc.
2. Corrective habits to regain health including proper breathing, exercise, positive mental attitude, and moderation in the pursuit of health and wealth.
3. New principles of living which includes the proper selection of food, hydrotherapy, light and air baths, mud baths, manipulation, mineral salts from organic sources, and steam or Turkish baths.

Naturopathic Medicine

What is Naturopathic Medicine?

Naturopathic medical schools are four-year full-time programs that train students in both naturopathy and conventional Western diagnosis and treatment. Graduates are trained to become primary care physicians in licensed states.

What states license naturopaths?

Currently Alaska, Arizona, British Columbia, Connecticut, Hawaii, Maine, Manitoba, Montana, New Hampshire, Ontario, Oregon, Utah, Vermont and Washington have naturopathic medical licensing laws.

How many schools are there?

There are currently four naturopathic schools in the United States: National College of Naturopathic Medicine in Portland, Oregon, Bastyr University in Seattle, Washington, Southwest College of Naturopathic Medicine in Mesa, Arizona and the University of Bridgeport College of Naturopathic Medicine.

Are there other naturopathic schools?

There are many naturopathic schools that offer degrees by home study. Although these schools grant doctorates in naturopathy, the graduates are not trained to become physicians.

Botanical Medicine

The use of herbs for healing is mentioned in the oldest living texts: the Indian Vedic scriptures dated at 5,000 BC and the Pen Tsao (Great Herbal) written by Emperor Shen Nung in China in 3,000 BC.

Eastern herbal medicine continues to the current day as Ayurvedic medicine and Traditional Chinese medicine. In the West, systems of herbology based on the Ayurvedic and Chinese models were developed by Galen, Hippocrates, Aristotle and Paracelsus.

In 1804 F. W. Serturmer, a German pharmacist, described the isolation of morphine from *Papaver somniferum* extracts. A similar process was soon applied to the *digitalis* herb to extract the cardiac glycosides. This began the era of extracting an active principle from a plant which evolved into drugs.

Modern botanical medicine is an eclectic combination of older systems of Western and Eastern herbology combined with the scientific knowledge of the actions of the constituents of the herbs. Several of the more well-known herbs now have double-blind scientific studies that validate their efficacy.

Many of the herbs currently used in the United States were learned from native American Indians.

Clinical Nutrition

The theory that foods can cure diseases was first proved by James Lind in 1757 who found that only fresh fruit and vegetables (which contain vitamin C) can cure scurvy. In 1810 Marzari in Italy connects maize diets and pellagra, a niacin deficiency which causes dermatitis, diarrhea, dementia, and death. In 1893 Eijkman feeds polished rice to chickens and produces paralysis. Hopkins in England report tiny fractions in milk are necessary for growth of rats.

Casimir Funk in Poland formulates the vitamin theory. The word vitamin is a combination of vital and amine.

Vitamin A from cod liver oil was discovered in 1913 by McCollum and Davis simultaneously. In 1918 Mellanby proposes that vitamin D can prevent rickets. Evans and Bishop discover vitamin E in 1922 and note that it is necessary for normal reproduction in animals. In 1926 Minot and Murphy find that pernicious anemia, a fatal disease, can be cured by large amounts of raw liver.

We now know quite a lot about the nutritional content of food, including macronutrients such as protein, fats and carbohydrates, and vitamins and minerals which function as cofactors for many of the enzymes in the body.

Clinical nutrition includes the use of nutritional supplements that have been studied and found useful in the treatment of disease.

Homeopathy

Homeopathy was founded by Samuel Hahnemann, a German physician, who had retired from medical practice disillusioned with 18th century medicine. In 1796 he published an “Essay on a New Principle” in which he states: “One should apply in the disease to be healed ... that remedy which is able to stimulate another artificially produced disease, as similar as possible; and the former will be healed - similia similibus -- likes with likes.”

Hahnemann published the *Organon of Medicine*, an outline of the philosophy and practice of homeopathy, and the *Materia Medica Pura*, a description of the homeopathic remedies and their indications in 1810 and 1811.

By 1862 homeopaths control 110 hospitals, 145 dispensaries, over 30 nursing homes, 62 orphan asylums and retirement homes, and 16 insane asylums in the United States.

Homeopathic remedies are made by diluting the substances several times. Hahnemann began by using low potencies, but he found that if the medicine was not strong enough to aggravate the symptoms, it was too weak to bring about a cure. In his experiments with making higher dilutions Hahnemann began to vigorously shake the remedies between dilutions. He discovered that this process, called potentising the remedy, resulted in a more potent remedy.

Classical Homeopathy

Classical homeopathy is a term used to describe homeopaths that strictly follow the philosophy of homeopathy as outlined by Samuel Hahnemann in the *Organon of Medicine*.

The most distinguishing characteristic of classical homeopathy is the use of single remedies. “In no case is it necessary to employ more than one single medicine at a time.” - Paragraph 273 of the *Organon*. Classical homeopaths use only one homeopathic remedy at a time and allow enough time to lapse between remedies for the deeper actions to manifest.

Contemporary homeopaths may use mixtures of several homeopathic remedies, usually designed for a specific symptom, disease or therapeutic purpose (such as organ support or detoxification).

Classical homeopaths also distinguish between acute prescribing and constitutional treatment. In the latter, one remedy is chosen to match the entire picture of the patient, including both physical and mental symptoms. Often patients will describe symptoms of past illnesses which come to the surface in a reverse order of their appearance. This is considered a very positive sign that the individual's life force is being stimulated and strengthened.

Classical homeopaths also rely upon extensive interviews to determine the appropriate remedy.

Treating the Cause

Perhaps one of the greatest strengths of naturopathic medicine is the extensive training the students get in the different styles of healing. Each has a unique philosophy, and a beginner can become easily confused by the similar philosophies.

Naturopaths synthesize a wide variety of medical systems including Ayurveda, Traditional Chinese Medicine, homeopathy, nature cure, natural hygiene, Galenic, Hippocratic and Paracelsian philosophies. When confronted with a real person, the astute naturopath draws upon each of these philosophies to provide a clue to guide the therapeutic choices. Sometimes several different approaches are used simultaneously.

Of all the philosophies, the most central to naturopathy is “Treat the Cause.” In the age of computers, one can easily look up both natural and drug protocols for almost any disease. In many cases this is sufficient, and most naturopaths use this as a resource. But these protocols treat the disease. The astute naturopath looks deeply into the presenting symptoms (both mental and physical) and goes one step further. The process is somewhat described as “thinking outside the box.”

The practicing naturopath is rapidly challenged by patients who have seen a variety of specialists and holistic doctors. In a way, they are forced to be creative in order to help these people. Most often the naturopath is their last hope.

Modern Medicine

The first medical school in the United States, the College of Pennsylvania, was founded in 1765. Benjamin Rush advocated “heroic medicine” and maintained that only bloodletting and calomel (mercury chloride) were required in medical practice.

In 1830 the first physician licensing laws were enacted, and soon repealed as “undemocratic”. Regular doctors were recognized as just another sect that had attempted to monopolize health care at the expense of the working class.

In 1846 the American Medical Association (AMA) is formed. The AMA prohibits any consultation or contact with irregular practitioners such as homeopaths and eliminate blacks and women. They vow to stop the spread of homeopathy. "We must admit that we never fought the homeopath on matters of principles; we fought him because he came into the community and got the business."

In 1856, one firm imports 500,000 leeches; its competitor imports 300,000.

In 1910 the Carnegie Foundation publishes The Flexnor Report, an evaluation of American medical schools. While pretending to be objective, the Report actually established guidelines meant to sanction orthodox medical schools and condemn homeopathic ones. In 1918 only one homeopathic school remained open in the United States.

How to Find a Naturopath

What is Naturopathy?

Naturopathy is a term made popular in the early 1900's to describe a system of medicine that emphasizes natural therapies including herbs, homeopathy, hydrotherapy, nutrition, diet, and manipulation.

What is Naturopathic Medicine?

Naturopathic medical schools have four-year full-time programs that teach both naturopathy and conventional Western diagnosis and treatment. Graduates are trained to become primary care physicians in licensed states.

There are currently four naturopathic medical schools in the United States and one in Canada: Bastyr, National, and Southwest Colleges of Naturopathic Medicine, The University of Bridgeport, and the Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine.

Currently Alaska, Arizona, British Columbia, Connecticut, Hawaii, Maine, Manitoba, Montana, New Hampshire, Ontario, Oregon, Utah, Vermont and Washington have naturopathic medical licensing laws.

Where do I find a naturopath?

Check the American Association of Naturopathic Physician's web site:

www.naturopathic.org

Top Ten Reasons to See a Naturopath

1. It's part of your healthy life-style.
2. You are taking a lot of supplements, but aren't sure if they are right for you.
3. You want advice from a specialist that is well trained in natural therapies.
4. You want to make an informed decision about your health.
5. You want a natural health program designed for you.
6. You are confused by contradictory health claims.
7. You have vague complaints but aren't sick enough to see a medical doctor or use drugs.
8. You are concerned about the long-term side effects of drugs.
9. You have an uncommon health problem which has many specialists baffled.
10. The drugs you are taking cause side effects which are worse than the original problem.