

Naturopathy, traditional naturopathy, naturopathic medicine, medical naturopaths, power, greed and the twisting of facts. By David Getoff, CCN, CTN, FAAIM

Although some of this was covered in the interview I did for the CHEK Institute's **CHEK report** <http://naturopath4you.com/PDFs/CHEKReport16thIssue2007Email.pdf> it deserves some additional discussion of its own, hence this more thorough and complete article.

It is close to impossible to find any health (or other) profession in which all of the professionals agree. Nonetheless, naturopathy is so divided and the public is so misinformed (what else is new) that the problem seems to be even worse than it is with many other occupations. My goal is to greatly reduce this confusion. I fully understand (and accept) that due to the rather fierce and forceful opinions on each side of this issue, my article may possibly lead to even more arguments.

I have been in full time private practice in this profession, naturopathy, for close to 20 years. For over 15 years, I have also been teaching classes and giving lectures in the field of nutrition and holistic health and medicine. Although we may call it holistic, complimentary, alternative (which it is not), nutrition based, or some new as yet to be coined term, the facts remain the same. To the public, we are practicing a form of health care which they believe is NOT drug based and which is designed to locate the cause, rather than to simply suppress undesirable symptoms, while letting their cause continue without ever being addressed. Many of our severely misinformed public, as well as most of the medical profession, also believe that none of it is based in sound science and that it generally does not work. What a pity, since neither of those statements is even remotely correct.

Naturopathy has been around for a great deal longer than any of the current four year "Naturopathic Medical" Colleges, such as Bastyr, National and Southwest. Traditional naturopathy (not necessarily naturopathic "medicine") generally involves investigating a patient's diet, lifestyle and symptoms, and then helping educate the patient to improve both diet and lifestyle while at the same time often adding in various nutritional supplements. These might include vitamins, minerals, homeopathic remedies, flower essences, super foods, probiotics and others, as well as special products for supporting specific organs, or helping to remove toxins from their body. Although this is a rather simplistic explanation, it gives a general idea of what I consider to be the original principles of traditional naturopathy.

The old saying that power corrupts, and that absolute power corrupts absolutely, too often applies to all fields and subsets of health and medicine. Power and greed (often couple with tremendous ignorance) actually make their way into every single part of our society. In some states, physical therapists did not want massage therapists to be licensed and felt that only the physical therapists should be allowed to give a massage. For years, the American Medical Association told all its member physicians, that they were NEVER to recommend chiropractors or chiropractic care or they could lose their licenses. The AMA was (and is) so strong and influential, that even after the courts found in favor of the chiropractors in a huge lawsuit, the public never even heard about

the lawsuit, or it's results, which were 100% in favor of the chiropractors. On the flip side, so to speak, acupuncture is many thousands of years old and proper training in this field takes many years of intense study. Medical doctors, who are already licensed to pierce the skin, made sure to get the "rights" to practice this field of medicine with only a tiny amount of additional study. In this case, I take the side of the licensed acupuncturists, who feel that this is very improper as well as unsafe, and puts the public at risk. If an MD wishes to become a CPA or an attorney, they would have to go through the entire schooling for these occupations. This should also be required for acupuncture, unless they can show, by taking appropriate examinations, that they already have this knowledge (which they do not).

This brings us to naturopathy. Traditional naturopathy, or traditional naturopathic medicine does not include the use of any prescription or non prescription drugs or surgical procedures and does not require any unclothed examinations of the patient. In the United States, only a minority of states have laws currently regulating the practice of naturopathy. Currently, I believe this number is around 20, and of these, only a few regulate or license traditional naturopathy.

Before I continue, I need to explain that although we (the public) are continually told that licensing laws are put in force to protect us, this is most often an out and out lie and a grave misrepresentation of the facts. The main purpose of licensing is to bring in revenue for the city, state, or county which issues the license. Many states will often look for new professions to license so as to bring in additional revenue. Have you ever noticed how the best and worst mechanics, plumbers, contractors, painters, dentists, and doctors, all have the same licenses? The state received its money, so the state is happy. Regulations to stop the bad ones from continuing to practice rarely ever get enforced and therefore, EXTREMELY BAD (but properly licensed) professionals and tradespeople, continue to harm our homes, our automobiles and our bodies each and every day.

Few states regulate the field of nutrition and even fewer regulated the practice of naturopathy until not too long ago. Then began a slow but dramatic change, which continues today, and although some will tell you it is being done to "protect" the public I vehemently disagree. The published research on just how bad "modern medicine" really is, has become so overwhelming that it is extremely scary. The number of people who die every year due to "correctly prescribed" prescription drugs has been estimated between 120,000- 160,000 and this has been published in peer reviewed Medical Journals! Death by medicine is one of the best articles ever written on this subject and it was written in collaboration by three MD's and two PhD's http://naturopath4you.com/images/Death_by_Medicine.pdf

Once again, the main point I am trying to make here is that although regulation and licensing is fairly strict for medical doctors, it does not seem to in any way be preventing or even reducing this HUGE number or annual deaths. Enter the newest form of naturopaths that I personally have coined my own term for many years ago. Since they DO NOT practice traditional naturopathy, since they badly want the legal rights to prescribe drugs and to do surgery as well as to do full body unclothed examinations, since they DO NOT represent the drugless ideals of traditional naturopathy, I refer to them as **Medical Naturopaths**.

As a traditional naturopath, I do not consider myself to be competing with true physicians (MD's and DO's). Most of our population incorrectly believe that these professions have the knowledge to help them get well and retain their health. Far too few in our population understand the difference between suppressing a symptom and addressing its cause. Even fewer truly understand the published statistics on medical interventions and so they continue to rely on their physician whenever they have a problem. To show just how ignorant the public really is in this area, I will give a general example regarding nutrition and medicine.

Although a large percentage of people do in fact know that medical doctors receive almost no nutritional education, they still ask their MD's for nutritional advice. It is like asking your plumber how to invest your money or your locksmith about how to re-wire your home. I always try to educate my patients to be better and more aware healthcare consumers. Some, however, will still seek approval from their MD's for the nutritional supplements I recommend. This very sad, and occasionally even fatal mistake has bothered me for many years. The MD is asked about something of which he/she knows very little and worse still, they will generally give an opinion instead of saying they do not have adequate expertise in that area. The patient is generally the one who suffers. I have a number of patients who have told me that family members, who they are convinced might still be alive today, were so scared by they MD's about taking some healthy nutritional supplements, that they stopped them all, even though they could tell they improved their health, just to NOT go against their doctors "orders". I like to make sure all of my own patients understand that we have (incorrectly) accepted the term "doctors orders". In reality, unless you are in prison or in the locked ward of a psychiatric institution, the doctor is actually giving you his or her honest recommendation of what to do or what to take. I refuse to call it an order, since he or she is not your commanding officer, and if you choose not to follow the recommendation you will not go to prison nor will you get a ticket or be fined.

Enter the "Medical Naturopath" an entirely new field and one which has been, and is being developed and pushed into the field of medicine. In order to carve our a larger niche with a huge reservoir of possible patients, the field of medical naturopathy was quietly born a few decades ago. I have even personally spoken with some individuals who met with Dr. Joseph Pizzorno when he was discussing his plans and goals for developing and licensing this field of health practitioner across America.

The medical naturopath (my term) is a strange combination of allopathic (drug and surgery based medicine) and naturopathic (holistic non drug medicine). It is being populated by the schools which produce this rather different kind of health practitioner. Their group is going from state to state with only one clear agenda which they are slowly accomplishing. Find ways to get each state to pass legislation which licenses their medical naturopaths, prevents all other naturopaths from remaining in practice, and gets the states to allow these practitioners to call themselves physicians and not simply doctors. This part is a clear power and status grab since dentists, PhD's, chiropractors, acupuncturists, optometrists, and a few others are only allowed to use the

term doctor in almost every state. The word physician has been previously “sewn up”, most likely by the AMA for MD’s and DO’s, the people who are fully licensed physicians in every state for all specialties and surgeries. Some of the definitions I found on web based dictionaries, actually said that physician is another term for Medical Doctor or MD.

The medical naturopaths and their political groups, clearly want their members to be looked at as equal to these other physicians. This must be for the purpose of money, power, insurance, etc., since there are no credentials, initials, or titles, which can make someone better able to help you get well. I often have to correct my patients and tell them to NOT call me doctor. I tell them to “please reserve that title for all of the professionals who were NOT able to help you, which is why you have now come to me”.

The medical Hippocratic oath which includes ***first do no harm*** is most definitely NOT being abided by in allopathic medicine. If it was, then medical doctors would always try nutrition, supplements, and life style changes before resorting to drugs and surgery, except in emergencies. If the medical naturopaths would at least bring back this important oath’s purpose, then I would applaud them for their effort. Alas, it has been shown that most medical naturopaths spend little time covering nutrition and diet in their initial consultations, while instead doing more of a standard medical intake procedure. I have treated many patients who had previously worked with a medical naturopath. They were always surprised at how good my results were in supporting their own bodies systems. Their medical naturopaths had often prescribed antibiotics for infections and hormones for various imbalances. They also often ordered thousands of dollars worth of Medical Lab tests (just like a physician) for each patient. Drugs for symptoms instead of nutrients, just like a medical doctor. In fact, if the medical naturopaths have their way, and traditional naturopathy becomes outlawed, there will be far fewer health practitioners available for those educated citizens who wish to stay away from drugs and surgery whenever possible. True holistic medicine would actually be taking a step backwards!

Since I do in fact believe that there is adequate room for both types of naturopaths (something that their group strongly feels is NOT possible), I would be in favor of either of two methods of handling the current friction promoting situation.

The first possibility would be for states to copy what California has done. In my state, the regulations allow both professionals to legally practice, and the medical naturopaths can only refer to themselves as doctors. They get the opportunity to acquire a state license and so they have to remain within their licenses “scope of practice”. Traditional naturopaths remain unlicensed, but are allowed to LEGALLY practice their healing arts for the public. The law requires that all unlicensed health practitioners must have their patients/clients fill out a waiver form. This form must include that the signer understands that their practitioner is not licensed by the state of California, that the practitioner is NOT a doctor or physician, and that any treatments they provide are to be considered complimentary to the treatments of the state licensed healing arts. The waiver must also contain information on the training that the practitioner has (whatever that may or may not be) and the patient must be offered a copy of this form to take and

save if desired. I consider this an exceptionally forward thinking and ethical way of handling the two naturopathic occupations. The medical naturopaths were extremely upset that they were not given the right to call themselves physicians (which they managed to get in many other states) and they were equally upset that the traditional naturopaths were allowed to continue to practice legally. They had succeeded in getting us thrown out in most of the other states in which they achieved their own licensure.

The second possibility that I feel would be equitable, fair, and good for the public, would be dual licensure. For this to work properly, the medical naturopaths would become licensed and allowed to call themselves doctors and would be able to prescribe those less dangerous prescription drugs that they received proper training in the use of. This might include antibiotics, hormones and some of the other non narcotic drugs. They would be licensed to perform those surgeries in which the state would determine they had received proper training, and would be allowed to order all appropriate laboratory tests on their patients. If the state felt it was appropriate, they would be licensed to receive insurance reimbursements.

The traditional naturopaths would have to refer to themselves as such, and could not use the prefix of doctor. This, by the way, will infuriate many thousands of traditional naturopaths as well as their professional associations. Please note that I am on NEITHER SIDE of this issue, I am simply conveying the facts as I see them, and outlining what I feel would be a beneficial and equitable solution. Both sides would need to get off their high horses and be willing (they currently are not willing) to do true bargaining, negotiation and arbitration.

The traditional naturopaths would have to use a waiver to CLEARLY show their training, and any certifications they may or may not have, and that they are NOT doctors. They would have to be trained in when to refer their patients to professionals with other qualifications and would need a second waiver form for any patients who refuse and wish to stay with them for treatment, knowing that it is not what is medically acceptable. They would be able to order lab tests if it could be shown that they understand how to interpret them or had special lab analysis training. Personally, I find many MD's fall way short in this area. Like the medical naturopaths, they could use all available supplements, but unlike the medical naturopaths, they could use no drugs and not perform any surgery. They would not be able to receive insurance reimbursements, although in a perfect world, if a person wished to use the services of ANY holistic professional, it would make sense for them to be able to get insurance coverage. Especially if they chose NOT to use their insurance for standard medical care. If this could be done in every state which licenses naturopaths, I feel the two groups might not only be able to work in the same state, but possibly even in the same clinic! Heck, maybe a few might even be able to become friends. Wouldn't that be nice.

I have been booked up months in advance with only word of mouth advertising for almost two decades. I do understand that I am very different from the majority of both groups of naturopaths. I spend an average of 10-15 thousand dollars each year attending scientific nutritional medicine conferences and seminars. I have attained

many additional certifications over the years and I am now flown in to lecture at some of these conferences that I have previously gone to only as an attendee.

I was flown in to give a day long lecture in traditional diets and Price-Pottenger based nutrition at the Southwest College of Naturopathic medicine. I have testified as an expert witness in court, in the field of clinical nutrition and am board certified in that field as well as in traditional naturopathy and in integrative medicine.

With all of this in mind, I still feel that nothing is written in stone. Six experts in the same field of medicine may give six (or more) different opinions and treatment proposals.

Why then is every medical professional so certain that only they are right and no one else should be allowed to practice? Greed and power.

My impossible desire is to live in a society (or better yet a world) without arrogance, ignorance and greed.

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