

Philosophy of Naturopathic Medicine

Naturopathic medicine is built upon a number of principles. The first is *vis medicatrix naturae* which means the healing power of nature or the vital force as the driving impetus behind healing disease. This concept is derived from the vitalist tradition of medicine, which traces its roots to Hippocrates as well as folk medicine traditions. Paracelsus, a physician from the 15th century, is often seen as the physician who utilized both the science and art of medicine, similar to what naturopathic doctors do today.

Primum non nocere means first do no harm. Doing no harm to the patient means that naturopathic physicians utilize therapies which act in tandem with the body's healing powers rather than against them. An example would be administering a substance which would enhance a fever rather than suppress it. This is done so the healing reaction, which the body is attempting by raising the fever, can complete itself.

Tolle Causam means to identify and treat the underlying cause of the disease. An example of this would be the treatment of ear aches which would include the elimination of substances such as dairy and wheat which contribute to inner ear swelling. While herbal and homeopathic medicines are given to reduce the immediate swelling, infection and pain, dairy is often identified as the cause and its elimination will correct the problem and keep it from returning.

Tolle Totum means to treat the whole person. An example of this would be the person who presents with irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). While medicines are given to treat the IBS, the underlying cause may be due to excessive stress and worry from a difficult social situation. In order to fully treat the IBS, the mental-emotional component of the disease must also be addressed.

Prevention is the Best Cure. Identifying patients' predispositions to developing diseases and developing a long term plan to prevent them is part of any naturopathic physician's treatment plan.

Docere, which means the doctor as teacher. Part of the naturopathic medical education involves how to teach patients to live healthy lifestyles. Lifestyle counseling, a wellness orientation and diet modifications, as well as prevention of disease, are important parts of a visit to a naturopathic physician. Naturopathic doctors are taught how to teach the patient so that they can begin to take control of their health.

Naturopathic physicians consider the art as well as the science of medicine when evaluating the patient and the best treatment. Naturopathic medicine views the signs and symptoms of the disease process to be an attempt by the body to heal itself and in need of enhancement, rather than suppression. Naturopathic philosophy teaches the ideal that the body has the ability to heal itself and, with the proper stimulus, completely correct the imbalance, provided there has been no permanent damage to the organism. In contrast allopathic philosophy stresses containment of symptoms rather than removal of the disease process. Because of the wellness and preventive medicine approaches to health, naturopathy also offers the individual and community resources for lowering medical costs while providing a better quality of life.

Modern naturopathic medicine has continued the tradition of evaluating therapeutic modalities which aid the vital force and the healing power of nature.

There are many therapies which a naturopathic doctor may recommend. Diet, nutrition, herbal medicine, fasting, massage, spinal manipulation, homeopathy, physical medicine, hydrotherapy, light therapy, oxygen therapy, counseling, minor surgery, acupuncture and Chinese medicine may all be incorporated into an individual physician's practice. Each naturopathic physician is trained as a family practice, primary care physician in order to best serve the patient. Some physicians however may choose to limit their practice to women's health, pediatrics, cardiology or obstetrics and a number of them have undergone advanced training in various areas such as homeopathy, physical medicine, herbal medicine or natural childbirth.