



Update in Naturopathic Medicine in New Mexico

LHHS- September 16th, 2021

Basics:

A definition of Naturopathic doctors from the American Association of Naturopathic Physicians:

"Naturopathic medicine is a distinct practice of medicine that emphasizes prevention and the self-healing process to treat each person holistically and improve outcomes while lowering health care costs. Naturopathic doctors are educated and trained in accredited naturopathic medical colleges. They diagnose, prevent and treat acute and chronic illness, restore and establish optimal health by supporting the person's inherent self-healing process. Rather than just suppressing symptoms, naturopathic doctors work to identify underlying causes of illness, and develop personalized treatment plans to address them."

Naturopathic doctors:

- Complete full pre-medical undergraduate degrees
- Attend 4 year+ accredited residential medical school programs
- Complete over 4000 hours of didactic and hands-on clinical training
- Complete two-year residency programs whenever possible
- Are regulated in 24 states, the District of Columbia, and the United States territories of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, primarily as primary care providers
- Are covered by private insurance in 10 states
- Are included in Medicaid programs in Vermont, Oregon, Washington and Arizona, and now New Mexico!

History in New Mexico:

- Achieved licensure in New Mexico in 2019 with the passage of SB135 Naturopathic Doctors' Practice Act
- Fully collaborated with the New Mexico Medical Board (NMMB) and the New Mexico Medical Society in drafting and passing SB135
- Are licensed as Primary Care Providers in New Mexico
- Regulated by the NMMB with support from the Naturopathic Doctors Advisory Council (NDAC)
- NMMB unanimously passed rules and regulations for ND's in November 2019
- Began granting licenses in New Mexico Spring 2020
- Inclusion as an approved Medicaid provider type in May of 2020
- First residency program for ND's established at Taos Whole Health October 2020 with rotations with specialists locally and throughout the state
- Currently 14 licensed ND's in New Mexico, with a predicted 20% increase per year (prediction based on outgoing questionnaires to new graduates)
- To date, no complaints have been filed on ND's in NM

Scope of Practice and impact on Primary Care:

- Licensed to provide full scope primary care including minor office procedures and full prescription rights except for opioids and benzodiazapines, alongside a full naturopathic scope
- Uniquely able to bridge the gap between traditional medicines and modern medicine
- Able to manage acute and chronic disease, using tools with minimal side effects including botanical medicine, nutritional medicine, mind-body medicine, homeopathic medicine, physical medicine, lifestyle medicine, or if necessary, pharmaceutical medicine
- Focus on prevention of chronic disease and the need for emergency medicine, therefore decreasing state healthcare costs
- Attending ND's at Taos Whole Health see about 25% Medicaid patients, and residents at Taos Whole Health see 70% Medicaid patients, about 200 patients and over 1000 medicaid visits per provider per year

Future Goals:

- Continue to establish and maintain licensure and association infrastructure
- Continue to educate the public, other health professionals, insurance agencies and legislators in the use, value, efficacy, scope and primary care status of Naturopathic medicine in New Mexico
- Improve health outcomes throughout the state by bridging the gaps between Western and holistic medicine
- Attract more primary care ND's to New Mexico to increase access to primary care and holistic medicine:
 - Future inclusion in rural healthcare tax credit
 - Future inclusion in the New Mexico Health Professional Loan Repayment Program